Oppressed Men: Depictions of Male Troubles and A Critique of Hegemonic Masculinity in West African Women's Writing (1970-2017)

Thesis Submitted in Accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool for the Degree of Doctor in Philosophy

by

Fatiha Bouanani

School of Arts and Histories, Languages, and Cultures

University of Liverpool

January, 2022

Oppressed Men: Depictions of Male Troubles and A Critique of Hegemonic Masculinity in West African Women's Writing (19702017)

By Fatiha Bouanani

Abstract

'Oppressed Men: Depictions of Male Troubles and A Critique of Hegemonic Masculinity in West African Women's Writing (1970-2017)' analyses fictional depictions of hegemonic masculinity in Anglophone and Francophone postcolonial literature written by Sub-Saharan female writers, namely, Flora Nwapa's *Idu,* Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*, Mariama Bậ's *Scarlet Song*, Ama Ata Aidoo's C*hanges: A Love Story*, Ayobami Adebayo's *Stay With Me*. My study explores the ways in which constructions of masculinities in the novels engage with Sub-Saharan ideals of patriarchy, traditions, and foreign forces, such as colonialism and modernity across time. I investigate male characters' possibility of maintaining a balance between traditional West African roles as husbands and fathers and new alternative modes of masculinity. I also examine depictions of convergent and divergent forms of hegemonic masculinity in each context from the pre-colonial to the contemporary period as well as their detrimental effects on male characters and on marginalised/subordinated masculinities, thus, offering an alternative perception of hegemonic masculinity.

Drawing on masculinity studies and postcolonial theory, this thesis identifies the complexity and constancy of Sub-Saharan ideals of hegemonic masculinity across time. I argue that hegemonic masculinity is presented as a problematic position as manifested through the psychological and emotional afflictions of the male characters under study, such as anxiety, bewilderment, and humiliation. Hegemonic masculinity is shown to be persistently and inextricably related to pre-colonial patriarchy and traditions; whereas it firmly resists change brought by colonialism and its aftermath. While highlighting recurrent and emerging tensions in Sub-Saharan masculinity, my project recognizes the similarities and dissimilarities in the textual as well as the contextual constructions of masculinities across the novels.

Hence, my research contributes and expands postcolonial studies as well as the existing scholarship on masculinity in the selected narratives. By analysing depictions of hegemonic masculinity, my project extends debates about African women's portrayal of men, seeking the possibility to push beyond a study of masculinism. With this aim in my mind, I hope to encourage a better, more nuanced engagement with hegemonic masculinity in African literature and women's writing, in particular.

Contents

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my supervisors, Dr Lucienne Loh and Prof Charles Forsdick for their patience and assistance in the preparation of this project. This thesis would have never been accomplished without their constant advice, guidance and insightful feedback. I also would like to thank the examiners for their invaluable feedback and recommendations. Great debts of gratitude go to my dear family. I am particularly indebted to my mother whose belief in me gave me the drive to ever push forward during my PhD journey. My sincere gratitude goes to my father for his abundant love and endless support. Deepest thanks go to my sister and my brother who have always been there for me, continuously offering care and support whenever needed. Special thanks go to my daughter Elena for her unconditional love, my unborn son Elyan and my husband for his continuous support during this journey.

I am also grateful to my precious friends Wassila, Souad, Lynne, Katie, Batoul, Imane, and Djoher for their emotional support which empowered me in moments of daunting loneliness and sadness.

Finally, I would like to thank the Algerian government and the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education, who funded my PhD at the University of Liverpool. The scholarship they offered to me remains ever a unique opportunity that helped me improve myself at a personal as well as academic level.

Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that this project is the fruit of my own investigation and references as well as acknowledgements are made wherever necessary.

Signature: 

Printed Name: Fatiha Bouanani

Introduction

The concept of masculinity signals a noteworthy tendency within critical scholarship to reappraise fictional representations of men in literature. The first studies on masculinities, which were published in the United States during the 1970s and 1980s, emerged within the fields of psychology and sociology. Masculinity theorist Michael S. Kimmel, for instance, underscores that since the 1990s, greater emphasis has been placed on literary and cultural representations.[1] Examination of representations of Sub-Saharan masculinities in female textual narratives is the central concern of this project. In this dissertation, I explore how Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, Mariama Bâ, Ama Ata Aidoo, and Ayobami Adebayo present hegemonic masculinity and its intersection with patriarchy and other social and foreign forces, such as indigenous traditions, colonialism, post-colonialism, and modernity.[2] At the core of my research is the study of the limits of hegemonic masculinity and its inter-relation with other subordinate/marginalised masculinities.[3] My aim is to explore the recurrent and emerging tensions in Sub-Saharan masculinities from the pre-colonial to the contemporary period.[4] The objective is to provide deeper engagement with literary representation of the experiences of adult male characters in marriage through a textual analysis of the female authors' interrogation of the perpetuation of patriarchy and the recognition of the burden of manhood in West

[1] 'Introduction' in *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities,* ed. by Michael S. Kimmel Robert. W Connell and Jeff Hearn, eds, (London: Sage, 2005), pp. 2

[2] The use or absence of hyphen has been a source of debate among critics. For instance, Roger Little argues that 'post-colonial' can be understood as pertaining to the period which follows the colonial era and that 'postcolonial' refers to the critical approach, a usage adopted in this study. Little, Roger, 'Seeds of Postcolonialism: Black Slavery and Cultural Difference to 1800', in *Francophone Postcolonial Studies*, ed. by Charles Forsdick and David Murphy (London: Arnold, 2003), p. 17. In contrast, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin suggest that the term postcolonialism is used to refer to the period after independence as well as the effects of colonization on West African cultures and societies. However, the term post-colonial is used to refer to the field of studies. Ashcroft, Bill and others, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concep*ts (London and New York 2000), p. 187.

[3] Concepts of hegemonic masculinity and subordinated/marginalised masculinities are defined in p. 34-35.

[4] I prefer to use the plural form of 'Sub-Saharan masculinities' in order to reflect the plurality and diversity of the forms of masculinity across contexts and over time.

Africa.[5] This methodology aids in illuminating fictional depictions of male crises and offer new insights into the chosen writers' existing scholarship on gender, in general, and masculinity, in particular. My central claim is that the female-authored texts criticise the prevalence of patriarchy and bring to the fore the double bind of hegemonic masculinity, depicting it not only as a privileged position, but also as problematic and tragic due to its constraining expectations which do not often fit with the male characters' abilities or desires.

My study focuses on post-colonial female-authored novels as they epitomise feminist writers' multifaceted engagement with male issues ranging from the pre-colonial to the contemporary period, and their rigorous attention to the pervasiveness of patriarchy and its intersection with influences such colonialism, post-colonialism, and modernity. The focus of these novels, while offering breadth and depth to my analysis, also serves the objectives of my study, which aims to undertake a critical analysis of the representations of male agonies provoked by the constraints of hegemonic masculinity in the works of well-established female authors in Sub-Saharan Africa. I choose five texts set in Nigeria, Ghana, and Senegal in order to provide depth to my analysis while also affording extensive coverage of writers' specific choices of literary techniques and thematic concerns. This choice is essential because this study investigates the ways in which narrative techniques inform readers' understanding of West African masculinities. These specific novels, which were published between the 1970 and 2017, serve my objectives as I approach them in my chapters chronologically, not just in terms of their dates of publication, but also in terms of the historical period in which the novels are set

[5] Stephan Miescher and Lisa Lindsay, working within an Africanist framework, choose to distinguish between 'masculinity' and 'manhood', using the latter to describe indigenous ideas that relate specifically to the physiology of being a man, and which often corresponds with male adulthood. Masculinity therefore becomes a 'broader, more abstract, and often implicit' notion. In this thesis, however, given the lack of ritualistic emphasis on male physiology, I use 'manhood' to refer to the ideal image of masculinity.

from the pre-colonial to the contemporary period. This time frame allows me to trace the perpetuation of patriarchy and its effects on male characters. More specifically, I am interested in exploring recurrent and different notions of hegemonic masculinity to which the male characters find themselves coerced to adhere across the West African region and over time. Therefore, my research raises the following research questions:

-What are the main factors that influence the constructions of West African masculinities, as represented in the selected novels?

-To what extent are resistance and change a possibility in the novels?

-How is non/conforming to hegemonic masculinity depicted by the female novelists?

-What are the literary devices employed by the female authors in their deconstruction of hegemonic masculinity?

This research aims to shed light on the depictions of the crises resulting from challenging what it means to be a Sub-Saharan African man, including analysis of feelings of anxiety, humiliation, and emotional trauma. What I want to demonstrate is that the male characters' subversion of hegemonic masculinity is shown to be devastating, effeminising, and often dehumanising. This subversion elicits the male characters' feelings of fear and shame, forcing them to search for ways to attain manhood even at a ruinous cost.

Furthermore, this study pinpoints the negative outcomes of conforming to hegemonic masculinity, such as destruction of marital relationships, as well as feelings of deception and regret. Through plot and insight into the thoughts of realistic characters, the texts bring into focus the negative outcomes of a coerced complicity with hegemonic masculinity as it negatively affects male characters' agency, self-definitions, and

relationships.[6] Indeed, the novels reveal that hegemonic masculinity does not always bring self-fulfilment; instead, it can lead to disillusionment and tragic ends when it does not suit personal desires.

Additionally, I aim to make visible the novels' depictions of the interrelation between male and female characters' fates and that both genders are victims of an ideological system that defines who they should be. The female authors also seem to suggest that, if change is supposed to reconfigure gender relations in Africa, it should come from the social conventions of what it means to be an "African" man or woman. As Ennin contends, "understanding the frailty of masculinity as presented in the characters undergoing a crisis […] makes it pertinent to recognize that masculinity as conceptual framework of analysis and interrogation will provide a better understanding of gender relations in Africa".[7] Indeed, I believe an examination of male characters enables an in depth understanding of Sub-Saharan gender relations portrayed in the novels.

The selected female novelists present another facet of hegemonic masculinity in their novels. Hegemonic masculinity, as the chapters illustrate, not only alludes to male oppression of women, but also is shown to catalyse male crisis and create fragmented masculine identities. Therefore, I argue that hegemonic masculinity is portrayed as a position with as many conflicting and problematic expectations as femininity. Basically, masculinity is fundamentally and constantly nourished by conventional patriarchal norms and traditions. It is undeniably true that the onset of colonialism, as the novels illustrate,

[6] By agency, I refer to the male characters' ability to act and make choices freely. It hinges around the question of "whether individuals can freely and automatically initiate action, or whether the things they do are in some sense determined by the ways in which their identity has been constructed". Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Studies*, p. 8.

[7] Theresah P Ennin, 'Aidoo's Men: Subverting Traditional Masculinity in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes: A Love Story*', *West Africa Review*, 20 (2012), 58 <Aidoo's Men: Subverting Traditional Masculinity in Ama Ata Aidoo's Changes: A Love Story | Ennin | West Africa Review (africaknowledgeproject.org)> [accessed 18 July 2017]

has a significant impact on the definitions of West African masculinities, gender roles, and marriage. However, despite these disruptions, pre-colonial West African patriarchy persists, thereby robustly resisting change and flexibility. Therefore, recurrent and emerging tensions in Sub-Saharan masculinities from the pre-colonial to the contemporary period demonstrate the complexities of hegemonic masculinity. The intricacies are epitomised through male characters' sense of emasculation and bewilderment, as well as the generation of fragmented identities entrapped between pre-colonial norms, colonial, and post-colonial exigencies and influences. In addition, the perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity through family and friends' pressure is shown to be cognitively and emotively tormenting. The community members, mothers, sisters, and male friends are seen to provoke feelings of worry and dilemma. Conversely, these characters' endless gaze, interference, and suggestions deepen the male characters' agonies instead of solving them. Through diverse literary techniques, these depictions criticise the social and familial impositions of hegemonic masculinity and foreground the paralysing implications of its inflexibility over time.

For example, in the first novel analysed in this study, *Idu*, Adiewere experiences intense anxiety as his status in the community is related to producing children. In a similar way, Amarajeme's life is dictated by the need to comply with gender norms within the particular bubble of the pre-colonial Igbo society. Amarajeme's yearning to maintain an outward appearance of manhood, while rejecting the idea of his sterility, is intrinsically linked to his internalization of, and complicity with, the community's norms, leading to his tragic end.

In *The Joys of Motherhood*, Nnaife assumes a marginalised/subordinated position in a colonial setting. Working as a washerman for colonial masters reflects his actual feminization while subverting the gender roles of his agrarian village. In addition to his

job, he is also subject to the coloniser's racist discourse leading to a development of double consciousness. Moreover, the novel shows that Nnaife's determination to uphold the status of a polygamous man and father requires a high degree of complicity with the socially induced behavioural norms of his village. However, despite his attempted complicity, Nnaife finds himself unable to conceive of a stable masculine identity due to the clash between colonialism and pre-colonial traditional expectations.

Corpus

Throughout this thesis, I explore representations of masculinities in Flora Nwapa's *Idu* (1970), Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979), Mariama Bâ's *Scarlet Song* (1981), Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes: A Love Story* (1991), and Ayobami Adebayo's *Stay With Me* (2017).[8] My choice of post-colonial female authors from West Africa is based on the aim of determining how Sub-Saharan African men and masculinities are portrayed from a woman's perspective. This thesis seeks to define how these female authors identify masculinity and how they comply with or challenge socially dominant ideals of manhood. Moreover, the authors selected for this study are well-established, and their work has been extensively examined from a feminist perspective. While feminists criticized patriarchal oppression of women, the effects of patriarchy on men are an angle feminist scholarship ignored. Therefore, this study of masculinity will contribute to existent scholarship on gender and feminism in the selected novels.

I argue that these novels illustrate that hegemonic masculinity is a position that provokes male crisis rather than a privileged status as in other novels. Therefore, this

[8] Unlike other novels, Mariama Bâ's *Scarlet Song* (1981) is a Francophone novel and in this thesis, I am using the English translated version.

study is, by necessity, selective. The five novels portray hegemonic masculinity as problematic. The theme of shame and anxiety, for instance, permeates all five texts in different ways, accompanying a set of recurrent tropes, such as virility, fatherhood, and male dominance over women. The first of these tropes is fathering children during pre-colonial times until contemporary Nigeria. Nwapa's *Idu* focuses on male sterility, and Adebayo's *Stay With Me* offers insights into the psyche of an impotent man. Thus, these novels reveal how these female authors, in these selected texts, engage not only with the female condition, but also in the deconstruction of imposed manhood. Collectively, these works provide a repertoire of novels from which to assess both continual and emerging issues that affect definitions of West African masculinity. Studying the texts together highlights the authors' sympathy and concern with anxious men and fragile masculinities in the West Africa region, including Nigeria, Ghana, and Senegal.

Furthermore, to investigate how men construct their gender identities among other men and in relation to masculine ideologies from the pre-colonial times to the contemporary period, the study chooses the five novels as narratives of continuity and change. The settings of these novels, which I discuss extensively across my analysis, highlight significant social change in terms of gender roles due to the influence of colonialism, post-colonialism, modernity, and the changing dynamics in male-female relations. As the novels under study reveal, masculinities after the onset of colonialism have seen tremendous redefinition, fragmentation, and degradation. Colonialism disrupted West African traditional societies' overall structure, particularly in urban areas. In *The Joys of Motherhood*, Emecheta chronicles the disintegration of men in urban Lagos and enacts a sneering critique of the injustices of the colonial system that entraps Nnaife and his wife Nnu Ego and bring about their eventual demise. Nnaife's masculinity in urban settings is degraded compared to the men in his traditional village Ibuza. Here, I do

not mean that Emecheta excludes the prevalence of pre-colonial patriarchal norms and traditions. However, as I argue, novels also demonstrate the cyclical patterns of West African masculinity over time, reflecting the perpetuation of patriarchal values in defining masculine expectations. The novels highlight the connection (or disconnection) between male characters' lived experience, self-image, and the evaluative framework by which they are measured. Along with overlaps and shared themes across settings, men's reputation and honour are freighted with distinct norms, constrained by different ideological forces, and tested with context-specific experiences. Therefore, the selected texts present a connection between Sub-Saharan masculinities, as well as contemporary alternatives to the problematic paradigm of patriarchal manhood.

However, it is important to note that the five novels that constitute the focus of this present study are also different in terms of their times of their production. The first four novels were published within a two-decade period 1970-1991 while the fifth was published 26 years later in 2017. I chose to conclude my thesis with Adebayo's novel *Stay With Me* (2017) as it illustrates the prevalence of pre-colonial impositions of fatherhood on contemporary Yoruba masculinities and highlights the role of the mother figure in upholding traditional thinking around the importance of lineage and the interrelation between a first son's and a mother's positions. Adebayo's novel is also featured with a new trend in African women's writing and feminism with its innovative style of narration. Adebayo in this debut novel gives voice to both the male and female characters alike, suggesting a modern dimension in West African feminist orientation. This is not to say that the inclusion is not without challenges. However, I have addressed them by studying masculinity as a fluid and static concept at the same time and within a specific place and time. This inclusion I believe strengthens my argument regarding West

African female authors' continuous concern with both feminine and masculine issues and the prevalence of Sub-Saharan traditional norms through time.[9]

Although the chosen female authors have shown a concern with pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial issues, their major focus is on gender issues and domestic matters and they exhibit different types of feminism.[10] For instance, Emecheta asserted: "I don't deal with great ideological issues. I write about the little happenings of everyday life. Being a woman, African born, I see things through an African woman's eyes. I chronicle the little happenings in the lives of the African women I know. I did not know that by doing so I was going to be called a feminist. But if I am now a feminist then I am an African feminist with a small f".[11] Margaret Fafa Nutsukpo argues that Ama Ata Aidoo's works echo the principles of Marxist feminism, which was along Marxist principles and premises.[12] As it will be evident throughout the chapters, despite the selected authors' differences, all their perspectives of feminism voiced out the realities of African women and men through their literary works which reveal an awareness of gender issues which negatively impact their lives.

[9] I acknowledge that there might be a risk of homogenisation of the attitudes and circumstances both described within the novels. Therefore, in order to avoid this, a consideration of the authors' biographies and the novels' times of production will be taken into account throughout my discussion in each chapter.

[10] Unlike these novels under study, African male-authored texts were produced in an epoch which was marked by a "fight to restore the tenets of the African tradition that had witnessed a backlash and denigration from imperialist influxes". Charles C., Fonchingong, 'Unbending Gender Narratives in African Literature', *Journal of International Women's Studies,* 8 (1), 135-147 (p. 146) https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol8/iss1/10.

[11] Emecheta, Buchi, 'Feminism with a small 'f'!', in *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism*, Olaniyan, T.&Quayson, A. (Eds.), (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing 2009) pp. 551-57.

[12] Margaret Fafa, Nutsukpo, "Feminism in Africa and African Women's Writing", *African Research Review:An International Multidisciplinary Journal*, Ethiopia, AFRREV Vol. 14 (1) (2020) http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/afrrev.v14i1.8. Marxist feminists view capitalism as "responsible for limiting women through issues such as inferior occupational and pay levels. They also regard the family as a domain where women are oppressed and exploited. They advocate economic independence as an avenue through which women can gain their freedom and, therefore, call for changes in the economic structure of society that will result in the empowerment of women through the provision of equal opportunities and resources". Margaret Fafa, Nutsukpo, "Feminism in Africa", p. 87. Indeed, in *Changes,* Esi is financially independent and even earns more than her husband Oko.

In addition, the novels I selected are examples of women writing in different colonial languages, including English and French. In an interview with Phanuel Akubueze Egejuru on the question of his audience, the Nigerian male writer Achebe responded with the following: "anybody who wants to read ... I no longer think of any particular group of people .... Anybody who is interested in the ideal I am expounding is my audience".[13] Similarly, Oyekan Owomoyela reports Esekiel Mphalele's suggestion that English and French have afforded Africans common languages with "which to present a nationalistic front against oppressors".[14] According to critics, writing in foreign languages serves as a means through which authors may engage in discussion with others who may not share their language either as fellow Africans or Europeans and global interlocutors.[15] However, the choice of language, as Héléne Tissieres argues, may not escape "the pain that any choice in a multilingual context causes".[16] Similarly, with female writers, English, French, and Portuguese are the most common languages employed in their writing. For instance, in an interview with Adeola James, Aidoo stated the following:

[13] Phanuel Akubueze Egejuru, *Towards African Literary Independence* (Westport, CN: Greenwood, 1980), p.19

[14] Oyekan Owomoyela, 'The question of language in African literatures', in *A History of Twentieth-Century Literatures* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1993), p. 356.

[15] The opposition between linguistic relativism and linguistic universalism has long been at the centre of the debate about the use of language in African literature. There are those who consider the use of European languages in African literary expressions from a pragmatic standpoint. There are also those who consider it not only as alienating the writer from his natural African audience but also subordinating African cultures to those of Europe. According to Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe, colonialism gave Africans "a language with which to talk to each other", and that "if it failed to give them a song, it at least gave them tongue for singing". According to Achebe, although employing a European language may look "like a dreadful betrayal and produce a guilty feeling," he intended to use it as it is given. See, Chinua Achebe, *African intellectual heritage* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), pp. 381-384. Achebe, however, neglects the fact that people do not either speak or have a mastery of these European languages. This view is challenged by Owomoyela, who considers modern African literature in European languages as "products of the assimilated elite". Owomoyela, 'The question of language, p. 374. Owomoela is right, but one need to take into account that literary works in African indigenous languages such as, Yoruba, Hausa, Zulu, and Sotho, among others, are hardly known outside their specific linguistic borders.

[16] Héléne Tissieres, 'Maghreb-sub-Saharan Connections', *Research in African Literatures*, 33.3 (2002), 32-54 (p.33).

> Writing in a language that is not even accessible to our people and one does worry about that […] writing in English makes it possible for me or any African writer to communicate with other people throughout the continent who share that colonial language. On the other hand, one's relationship to one's own immediate environment is fairly non-existent or rather controversial.[17]

Aidoo concludes that she is aware of the language issue, but for her it is more effective to write than not to write at all.[18] Based on Aidoo's statements, one can assume that writing in a European language is a deliberate choice made by both male and female African writers. Similar to Aidoo, Emecheta states that she writes for "anybody who can read".[19] Thus, it may be argued that female authors write in Western languages to reach a far broader audience. Therefore, writing in these languages is what has paved the way, for the female authors under discussion, to gain worldwide recognition.[20]

Although a shared linguistic heritage is not a factor uniting these five authors, Bâ is a Francophone novelist while others are Anglophone, and I posit that these texts complement one another. The arguments that support my position are manifold. In geographical terms, the selection comes from the western region of Africa, including novels from Nigeria, Ghana, and Senegal. This geographical spread also encompasses different forms of Western colonial imperialism, namely British and French in the case of Senegal. Like Nigeria and Ghana, Senegal has suffered not only from French

[17] *In Their Own Voices: African Women Writers Talk,* ed. by Adeola James (London: James Currey; Portsmouth: N.H., Heinemann, 1990), pp. 9.
[18] Ibid., p. 9.
[19] Ibid., p. 39.
[20] In contrast to Aidoo, Tanzanian female playwright Penina Muhando has never been invited to any African writers' conference because she has written eight plays in Kiswahili. She, therefore, has felt isolated. See James, *Their Own Voices*, p. 9.

occupation in the past, but also the painful transition to independence, which has resulted in profound disillusionment. According to Stephanie Newell, Anglophone and Francophone literature "manifest certain common features deriving from the specific colonial and post-colonial experiences of West African authors".[21] Furthermore, like many African nations, these three countries have felt consequences of post-colonialism and global capitalism.

It is also important to emphasise that it is not my intention to homogenise masculinity in these contexts. In contrast, I am aware that, while Nwapa, Emecheta, Aidoo and, Ayobami all hail from nations where the prominent religion is Christianity, Bâ could be considered somewhat of an outsider in this study as she comes from a Muslim country. Moreover, all of Bâ's novels are set in Senegal, where Islam is the predominant religion. However, my analysis offers a nuanced argument, accounting for the specificities of each context that are taken into consideration throughout the chapters. Therefore, I believe that differentiating Senegal with the other countries would only obfuscate the novels' portrayal of the common concerns, themes, realities, and cultural heritage that bind these diverse cultures together.

Methodology

My analysis of these novels, while theoretically informed by masculinity studies and postcolonial theory, attempts to create nuanced engagement with the novels as literary texts which I analyse as a series of case studies. The purpose is to demonstrate the different kinds and expressions of crises experienced by male characters suffering under

[21] Stephanie Newell, *West African Literatures: Ways of Reading* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp22.

the pressure of hegemonic patterns of masculinity. I also focus on comparing and contrasting constructions and responses to hegemonic masculinity and their effects on male characters in terms of outcome of plot as well as on male characters' lives.[22] Every analysis made is either literary-critical itself or will have bearing upon literary analysis. Moreover, any claims I make with regard to the concept of masculinity across the thesis should be understood as being about the male characters' fictional construction, performance, and negotiation of masculinities, as represented in the literary narratives. For example, I attentively examine the male characters' thoughts through the technique of point of view to grasp their perceptions of and responses towards masculine norms. Additionally, this study accounts for the diversity of the literary strategies deployed by female authors in their deconstruction of hegemonic masculinity, namely irony, character foils, and tragedy.[23] For instance, realist literature, such as these novels, allows the reader to delve deep into the consciousness of the male characters to explore their inner feelings, anxieties and vulnerabilities. Furthermore, it enables me to examine the intersectional and fluid nature of masculinity across time, which other approaches could not permit.[24] Thus, I argue that African literature, and specifically West African women's writing, would benefit significantly from exploring literary strategies employed by authors in their

[22] Although throughout this thesis, I discuss common issues such as polygamy, fatherhood, and family interference, the comparative mode adopted helps to avoid the flattening effect of reading the selected texts as they deal with divergent social contexts, customs, and contrasting reactions from the male characters. In addition, all the novels are written and set in different periods of time; ranging from 1970 to 2017 to cover the pre-colonial, colonial, postcolonial, and contemporary period.

[23] Throughout my thesis, my focus is not on verbal irony, but on the incongruity between what is expected and what actually occurs in the plot of the novels or what is termed situational irony. For example, I focus on devices such as character development, situation, and plot to stress the complexities of the male characters' masculinities and highlight the contrast between an imaginary ideal and actual condition or set of circumstances in which they find themselves.

[24] The fluid nature of masculinity signifies that the male characters examined in this study may adopt one particular position in the male hierarchy, or they may change, flit incessantly between categories, as is the case with the male characters Ousmane and Oko. This, I argue, highlights that performing masculinity constantly requires a perpetual negotiation of social influences and discourses.

representations of African masculinities as well as deconstruction of hegemonic masculinity.

Literature Review

To situate my study among previous scholarship, the research has adopted a two-fold approach. Firstly, there is a review of literature on African women's writing from the feminist perspective. Secondly, it traces the major trends in previous scholarship on masculinities studies in African literature, and in women's writing in particular. In this way, a general understanding of how African female authors' texts have been explored by scholars helps to situate my research among previous studies.

A central axis of the selected novels is the profound interest in gender, whether in relation to patriarchy, polygamy, womanhood, motherhood, or gendered violence. Female authors' fascination with women's issues, in particular, is frequently apparent through the choice of females as protagonists and often expressed in interviews.[25] However, this should not obfuscate the selected female authors' concern with male issues, as my study aims to show. The focus on female characters in these novels has been acknowledged by critics across generations. Amongst these, Ernest Emenyonu, in *New Women's Writing in African Literature: A Review* (2006), argues that "those first generation female writers and their emerging successors of the second generation continue to visit and revisit the common issues of being female in Africa, the third world and defining reality from the perspective of the African woman".[26] Indeed, across African women's fictional writing, women's experiences are extensively examined while they demarginalize them from the

[25] See James, *In Their Own Voices*.
[26] Ernest N Emenyonu and Patricia T Emenyonu, *New Women's Writing in African Literature: A Review* (Oxford/Trenton, New Jersey: James Currey/Africa World Press, 2004), pp. (xiii).

margins of male narratives.[27] However, the dearth of studies on feminism should also not disguise depictions of male experiences from a female lens.

The emergence of feminism in the 1960s as a distinct critical field of enquiry has shaped scholars' take on novels. Western feminism has paved the way for black feminism, which developed out of a need to conceive of a feminism that was more appropriate for non-white, primarily middle-class women. Initially, black feminism was an African American project but has since broadened its reach to include African women. African feminism emerged as a sub-category closely aligned with black feminism, or womanism, and third-world feminism. The development of black feminism anticipated the need for African feminism and the recognition that women, although united in a feminist cause, were by no means a homogenous group.[28] While this development may not seem to have direct relevance to the study of masculinity, it is of profound importance to trace major trends in previous scholarship, among which is feminism.

A survey of the novelists' critical scholarship demonstrates that their fiction is acclaimed for its detailed depictions of African women. A long line of critics, ranging from the 1980s until now, have sought to understand the portrayal of female characters in the light of feminism. For this reason, as Juliana Makuchi Nfah-Abbenyi argues, the increase in scholarly attention on, by, and about women in the mid-1980s was another key factor in changing the place of African women writers in African literature and criticism.[29] Indeed, previous scholarship has brought a much-needed specialist emphasis

[27] For more details on African male writers' depictions of African women, see Florence Stratton, *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1994).
[28]Among black feminism's most influential thinkers are Alice Walker, Angela Davis, Ann Moody, Barbara Smith and Audre Lorde. For more on black feminism, see Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (London; New York: Routledge, 1991).
[29] Juliana Makuchi Nfah-Abbenyi, 'Introduction', in *Gender in African Women's Writing: Identity, Sexuality, and Difference* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), pp. 4. For more details on the main reasons behind the invisibility of African female writers in literary scholarship, see Chidi Ikonne, 'African Literature in Africa Twenty-Five Years After the Dakar and Freetown Conferences', in *African Literature*, ed. by Hal Wylie, Dennis Brutus, and Juris Silenieks (Washington DC: Three Continents, 1990), p. 97-105.

on issues that concern the portrayal of female characters from a woman's perspective. Amongst these issues is the redefinition of images of African womanhood by women writers. For example, Florence Stratton, in *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender* (1994), and Elleke Boehmer, in *Stories of Women: Gender and Narrative in Post-colonial Nation* (2006), have made major contributions to the analysis of women's depictions in African novels.[30] Studies of this kind often scrutinize the extent to which female authors have dismantled or upheld stereotypes of women through their portrayal of female characters. However, although these books' titles mention the word 'gender', they equate gender to women through their focus on female characters and have failed to consider male characters as gendered. Therefore, Lahoucine Ouzgane argues that "so much of African history and African literary and cultural productions has been read and analysed with African men as an unmarked category".[31] This unexamined category, despite attracting the attention of scholars recently, still requires further investigation of the experiences of men in relation to patriarchy in order to contribute to a more profound understanding of literary representations of West African masculinities. By extending critical attention to an array of male characters in female-authored fiction, I argue that masculinity is a gendered category that deserves the same attention as femininity in the context of West African women authored novels. Furthermore, I turn attention to the portrayal of hegemonic masculinity from a different angle not previously explored in literature to date. This study of masculinity in the selected novels is intended to be seen as augmenting currently available discussions of gender and providing new areas of investigation.

[30] Elleke Boehmer, *Stories of Women: Gender and Narrative in Post-colonial Nation* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2005).
[31] 'Introduction', *Men in African Film and Fiction*, ed. by Lahoucine Ouzgane (University of Alberta, Canada: Boydell & Brewer, 2011), pp. 7 <Men in African Film and Fiction (oclc.org)> [accessed 03 August 2017].

The centrality of female characters in African female-authored texts is acclaimed for writing back to African male writers. While I agree with these critics, I posit that his statement supports a reductive binary perception of the portrayal of male and female characters in African literature as stereotypical, which is not always the case. Throughout this thesis, I argue that in these chosen texts the female authors show great sympathy with the male characters. This trend has made the topic even more appealing to critics; influenced by feminism, Nii Okain Teiko asserts that, Aidoo and Emecheta, like most female writers, are strong African feminists who have been committed to what Mawuli Adjei refers to as the "male-bashing" theology to set the record straight as far as gender constructions of both sexes in African literature are concerned.[32]

An analysis of the extent of feminism in African women's writing has been undertaken by Katherine Frank in *Women Without Men: The Feminist Novel in Africa* (1987). Frank compares Western feminist literature to African women's writing and postulates that African female writers are more militant and radical. According to Frank:

> Our [the African] heroine slams the door on her domestic prison, journeys out into the great world, slays the dragon of her patriarchal society, and triumphantly discovers the grail of feminism by 'finding herself,' and by 'a destiny of their own' [...] a destiny of vengeance.[33]

[32] Nii Okain Teiko, 'Changing Conceptions of Masculinity in the Marital Landscape of Africa: A Study of Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes* and Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*', *Matatu* 49.2 (2017), p. 330 <Changing Conceptions of Masculinity in the Marital Landscape of Africa in: Matatu Volume 49 Issue 2 (2017) (brill.com)> [accessed 10 April 2018]. See also, Mawuli Adjei, 'Male-Bashing and Narrative Subjectivity in Amma Darko's First Three Novels', *SKASE Journal of Literary Studies* 1.1 (2009), 47–61 <Microsoft Word - Adjei-1.doc (psu.edu)> [accessed 28 December 2016].

[33] Katherine Frank, 'Women Without Men: The Feminist Novel in Africa', *African Literature Today*,15 (1987), 14-15.

Frank's claim reflects dominant trends in scholarly commentaries about African women's depictions of women and men and its relation to writing back to African male writers. For instance, Mawuli Adjei agrees with Frank's argument that the "destiny of vengeance" is a "natural reaction to novels by African male writers".[34] I argue that Frank and Adjei are partially right in their arguments. While these authors take into consideration radical feminism, they also seem to generalize African women writers' tendency to provide stereotypical images of African men. I insist that this approach is, in fact, limiting and misleading. Therefore, this study aims to expand on this claim by unearthing how the Sub-Saharan female writers under study were equally involved in foregrounding men's limitations by hegemonic masculinity's demands. As this study aims to show, in the chosen novels, hegemonic masculinity is not presented as the default position, but instead as conflicting and problematic. While the novels show that masculinity is fluid, hegemonic masculinity resists change across time due to the pre-colonial patriarchal norms and traditions. Consequently, the incompatibility between West African patriarchy and traditions versus foreign influences and modernity triggers a crisis in the male characters' masculinities. Therefore, the female authors dismantle the constant impositions of hegemonic masculinity and attempt to redefine notions of Sub-Saharan masculinities in the context of marriage and gender roles through a valorisation of love, gender equality, paternal care and responsibility.

Feminist scholars have also extensively focused on the oppression and marginalization of women in African women's writing. Given this tendency, Katwiwa Mule advances the view that criticisms of African women's writing in the 1980s and

[34] Mawuli Adjei, 'Male-Bashing and Narrative Subjectivity in Amma Darko's First Three Novels', *SKASE Journal of Literary Studies* 1.1 (2009), 48 <Microsoft Word - Adjei-1.doc (psu.edu)> [accessed 28 December 2016].

1990s were concerned with issues of victimhood, identity and agency.[35] Therefore, these critics have primarily concentrated on situations in which women are victims of rape, battery, betrayal, abandonment, exploitation, and obnoxious cultural practices.[36] It can be assumed that these views seem to respond to Bessie Head's claim, as quoted in Adeola James:

> The ancestors made so many errors and one of the most bitter-making things was that they relegated to men a superior position in the tribe, while women were regarded, in a congenial sense as being inferior form of human life. To this day, women still suffer from all calamities that befall an inferior form of human life.[37]

For instance, Olga Kenyon, in *Writing Women* focuses on female oppression and observes that Buchi Emecheta "offers stories of immigrant experience, a record of the effects of marginalisation and a woman's triumph over oppression".[38] Like Kenyon, Sadia Zulfiqar Chaudhry, in *African Women Writers and the Politics of Gender* (2014), argues that African women writers address women's issues in particular cultural positions. Throughout her doctoral thesis, Zulfiqar Chaudhry underlines African women's specific problems and their emancipation and empowerment from a Western feminist perspective.[39] Wesley Brown, in *Women Writers in Black Africa*, in an analysis of the work of African women writers, notes that "their inner weakness often stems from the degree to which they have internalized male modes of perception until they accept male

[35] Katwiwa Mule, 'Women's Spaces, Women's Visions: Politics, Poetics and Resistance', in *African Women's Vision* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2007), pp. 5
[36] Adjei, 'Male-Bashing and Narrative Subjectivity', p. 48.
[37] James, *In their Own Voices*, p. 5.
[38] Olga Keyon, *Writing Women* (London: Pluto Press, 1991), p. 132.
[39] Sadia Zulfiqar Chaudhry, 'African Women Writers and the Politics of Gender (2014)' (doctoral thesis, University of Glasgow, 2014) http://theses.gla.ac.uk/5202 [accessed 26 July 2017].

notions about female inadequacy and about masculine privilege".[40] Brown further contends that there is a tendency by female authors in Africa to be "preoccupied with the woman's personal strength - or lack of it when they analyse sexual roles and sexual inequality".[41] Similarly, Mohamed Fathi Helaly, in "Cultural Collision and Women's Victimization in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*" (2016), examines Emecheta's portrayal of victimized female characters and argues that the female character Nnu Ego suffers as a wife and mother due to the clash between traditionalism and modernity in both the Ibuza community and urban Lagos.[42]

In this conceptualization of patriarchy and women's oppression, critics have not acknowledged that West African patriarchy affects both men and women, as this study aims to reveal. As a result, this tendency creates an image of a perpetrator-victim relationship, in which the African man is seen as the enemy.[43] For instance, Lahoucine Ouzgane suggests that "[a]ny study of African men cannot ignore the reality that patriarchal power is still in place across the continent. Men still, by and large, elect to exercise what Bob Connell calls the 'patriarchal dividend', chiefly at the expense of women".[44] From a similar vein, Katherine Frank views that the African man in African women's writing is portrayed as "the enemy, the exploiter, and oppressor".[45] While I agree that patriarchy still persists, Katherine Frank's claim regarding the image of African men in African women's writing, in addition to Lahoucine Ouzgane's appeal to consider African men as agents of patriarchy, are extremely limiting and offer a misleading approach. Rather, this sweeping generalisation leads to the establishment of a recurrent

[40] Wesley Brown, *Women Writers in Black Africa* (London: Greenwood Press, 1981), pp. 181.
[41] Ibid.,
[42] See, Mohamed Fathi Helaly, 'Cultural Collision and Women Victimization in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*', *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, 5.2 (2016), 117-27 <http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.5n.2p.117>.
[43] Ennin, 'Aidoo's Men', p. 56.
[44] Ouzgane, *Men in African Film and Fiction*, p. 2.
[45] Frank, 'Women Without Men', p. 14.

view on African women writers' portrayal of African men as oppressors of women and beneficiaries of patriarchy. As Nancy Dowd proposes, "by focusing on women, feminists have constructed men largely as unidimensional".[46] Moreover, as scholars have solely focussed on the privilege of the category of hegemonic masculinity, they obfuscate its constraints on men and disregard its detrimental impact on subordinate and marginalised masculinities. Thus, to offer an accurate portrayal of men in West African women's writing, it is necessary to examine Sub-Saharan masculinities beyond stereotypes of gender relationships that solely portray men as manipulative and authoritarian.

Patriarchy, in the novels under study, is inextricably linked to Sub-Saharan hegemonic ideals of masculinity. Therefore, the frequent reference to women's oppression leaves the male characters as the unmarked category. Sophia Catherine Smith rightly purports that this approach is "for the purpose of illustrating the detrimental impact of patriarchy on the female protagonist(s) or a set of masculine attributes somehow perceived to be normative and not requiring further explanation".[47] Pioneering gender critic Judith Butler suggests that men and masculinity have escaped scholarly attention to a certain extent because patriarchal discourse may dictate that "the universal person and the masculine gender are conflated, thereby defining women in terms of their sex and extolling men as the bearers of a body-transparent personhood".[48] In a similar vein, Whitehead and Barrett state the following: "as feminists have long argued, the historical centrality of malestream writing, philosophy and political practice has served to make

[46] Nancy. E Dowd, *Man Question: Male Subordination and Privilege* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), p. 3.
[47] Sophie Catherine Smith, 'Negotiations of masculinity in Francophone men's writing', (doctoral thesis, Swansea University, 2009), p. 9 <http://cronfa.swan.ac.uk/Record/cronfa43153> [accessed 7 October 2017]
[48] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York; London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 13-14.

men invisible, particularly to themselves".[49] Butler, Whitehead, and Barrett have drawn attention to the fact that masculinity is viewed by critics as a dominant gender with an unchallenged position, resulting in the tendency to focus on femininity as a 'marginalised' gender category. Inspired by Robert Connell's conception of masculinity, this research explores multiple forms of masculinity with a focus on the literary depictions of constraints of hegemonic masculinity and the experiences of men marginalised or subordinated masculinity.[50] With this aim at the forefront, I prefer to align my study of the novels in the light of African studies on masculinity because an examination of the texts, while helping to foreground the intersection of hegemonic masculinity with indigenous Sub-Saharan norms and foreign forces such as colonialism, also serves to consolidate the complexity of hegemonic masculinity in West Africa and its recurrent and emerging tensions.[51]

Across this thesis, while attempting to complicate and nuance existing scholarship on female novelists from West Africa and gender, I also discuss the possibility of extending critics' focus on the female writers' interest in domestic themes such as marriage, sexuality, and polygamy, as well as taboo topics such as infertility through the lens of masculinity studies. While it is true that African female novelists are often concerned with women, womanhood, and the feminine gender, it may be more accurate to state that critics, rather than authors, have been those to glide over fictional constructions of masculinity, preferring to focus solely on what African female authors have to say on the condition of women. For instance, all novels under study deal with polygamy and patriarchy in relation to both femininity and masculinity. Female writers,

[49] Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett, 'The Sociology of Masculinity', in *The Masculinities Reader*, ed. by Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), p. 4.
[50] See, Connell, Robert W., *Masculinities*, 2nd eds (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005).
[51] Robert Morrell, Lahoucine Ouzgane, Stephanie Miescher, and Lisa Lindsay are among the well-known scholars in African studies on masculinity.

therefore, deal with themes associated with women and men, though men's domestic issues persistently escape scholarly interrogation.

The inception of the discipline of masculinity studies around the 1990s drew remarkable attention to men's experiences.[52] Therefore, the study of gender, which used to be equated to women, has expanded to include studies of gender issues about men and masculinities in various fields, including literature.[53] Addressing male characters as gendered beings reflects the growing interest in examining literary representations of African men and masculinities and hints towards a new direction in analysing African women's texts beyond feminism.[54]

A critical scrutiny of the existing literature reveals that, while examining depictions of masculinity in post-colonial African male and female-authored texts, academic interests have largely revolved around a discussion of masculinity during

[52] Connell, Hearn, and Kimmel, some of the most well-known scholars of masculinity studies, situate themselves in the camp that rejects the term "men's studies", for example, because it seems to imply a symmetry with women's studies that is misleading given the reality of asymmetrical gender power relations, and embrace instead the terms "studies of men and masculinities" or "critical studies on men" because they believe it "more accurately reflect[s] the nature of contemporary work, which is inspired by, but not simply parallel to, feminist research on women". Michael S. Kimmel, Robert. W Connell, and Jeff Hearn, eds, 'Introduction' in *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities* (London: Sage, 2005), p. 3. While Alex Hobbs argues that the term "men's studies" is primarily used within sociology, while "masculinity studies" is used in literary studies. Alex Hobbs, 'Masculinity Studies and Literature', *Literature Compass*, 10.4 (2013), p. 383 https://doi.org/10.1111/lic3.12057.

[53] According to Robert Connell, feminist thought has reinforced this drift by focusing on the lives of women. See Connell, Hearn, and Kimmel, *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities*, p. 1.

[54] Scholars of masculinity in African literature seem to have responded to Miescher's and Lindsay's claim that: "While gender has become a major research focus in African Studies over the last twenty years, men have rarely been the subject of research on gender in Africa. As the field of gender study emerged, the male subject was frequently positioned as given, serving as a backdrop in the examination of w omen's experiences" (1). Stephan F. Miescher and Lisa Lindsay, 'Introduction', in *Men and Masculinities in Modern African History*, ed. by Lisa A. Lindsay & Stephan F. Miescher (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003), p. 1. Robert Morrell and Lahoucine Ouzgane also observe the lack of critical work on masculinities, despite a flourishing field of African gender studies. Robert Morrell and Lahoucine Ouzgane, 'African Masculinities: An Introduction', in *African Masculinities: Men in Africa from the Late Nineteenth Century to the Present*, ed. by Lahoucine Ouzgane and Robert Morrell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 1. For example, Devin Bryson identifies the transnational and problematic gendered identities of immigrants in African fiction in order to explore the construction (and deconstruction) of masculinity in African literature, whilst highlighting the inter-cultural and inter-racial dynamics of immigrant masculinity and constructions of sexuality. See, Devin Bryson, 'The Submitted Body: Discursive and Masochistic Transformations of Masculinity in Simon Njami's African Gigolo', *Research in African Literatures*, 39.4 (2008), 84-104 <The submitted body: discursive and masochistic transformation of masculinit...: University of Liverpool Library (oclc.org)> accessed 26/12/2021.

colonialism and following independence. For example, in *Men in African Film and Fiction* (2011) edited and co-authored by Lahoucine Ouzgane, scholars attempt to problematise masculinity and to focus on a field of enquiry that has been widely neglected in the discussion, namely the constructions of masculinity in African literature. This collection was the first successful attempt to put into practice the examination of men and masculinities in films and novels written by both male and female African authors. The essays in the book examine masculinity in literary and cinematographic works and cover a range of contemporary issues, such as poverty, gender inequality, and AIDS. Similarly, Sarah Elizabeth Ngoh, in her doctoral thesis *Gendering Men: Masculinities, Nationalisms, and Post-Independence African Literature* (2016), covers colonial and post-colonial issues. Ngoh claims that African men's performance of masculinities is deeply affected by the construction of the nation.[55] While I agree with these critics, their studies are limited in terms of the anti-colonial struggle and post-colonial period. Thus, the effects of indigenous cultural norms are overlooked. Across this study, I further highlight the importance of exploring pre-colonial norms in order to understand current tensions and the complexity of West African masculinities during and after colonialism. In the novels under study, patriarchy and pre-colonial traditions, combined with foreign forces, have anticipated contemporary crises in masculinity. For example, aiming to scrupulously mirror the burden of manhood in contemporary Nigeria, Ayobami Adebayo, in *Stay With Me* (2017), skilfully captures the negative consequences of integrating pre-colonial beliefs on male procreation on Akin's identity and marriage.[56]

It is also important to acknowledge the growing field of literary criticism on African men and masculinities, highlighting specifically how hegemonic masculinity in

[55] Sarah Elizabeth Ngoh, 'Gendering Men: Masculinities, Nationalisms, and Post-Independence African Literature', (doctoral thesis, University of Kansas, 2016) <http://hdl.handle.net/1808/24196> [accessed 07 October 2017].
[56] Ayobami Adebayo, *Stay with Me* (Lagos: Ouida Books, 2017).

women's writing has long interested scholars. A long critical tradition has focused on the plurality and fluidity of masculinity, whereas unproblematically construed hegemonic masculinity is portrayed as an unimpeded position. Although sociologists and gender theorists now perceive the hierarchical structure of masculinity, constituting dominant, subordinate, and marginalised positions, homogeneity is still recurrent in literary criticism.[57] For instance, Sylvester Mutunda, in his PhD thesis *Through A Female Lens: Aspects of Masculinity in Francophone African Women's Writing* (2009), discusses the divergent types of masculinities and groups male characters into two types, namely hegemonic and alternative masculinities.[58] Mutunda, however, does not fully reflect the experiences of male characters as depicted in the novels. Theresah P. Ennin identifies three images of African men in literary works by African women. The first image is man as the enemy using patriarchal power against women. According to Ennin, this negative portraiture is:

> An attempt to pay the male writers back for their one-dimensional representation of the female condition in literary works…women writers tend to perpetuate the same condition of marginalization and one-dimensionality which they accuse the male writers of doing to the representations of the female condition.[59]

The second image refers to emasculated men, in which men are victims. The third kind of male character that rarely appears in women's works is that characterised by hard work, fairness, and respect in his relationships with women and other men.[60] While Mutunda

[57] See Robert W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 2nd ed (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005).
[58] Sylvester Mutunda, 'Through A Female Lens: Aspects of Masculinity in Francophone African Women's', (doctoral thesis, University of Arizona, 2009) <http://hdl.handle.net/10150/194161> [accessed 6-Jul-2017].
[59] Ennin, 'Aidoo's Men', p. 57-8.
[60] Ennin, 'Aidoo's Men', p. 58.

focuses on the first and third images of male characters, there is still a lack of criticism of the second type that Ennin envisages, limiting the perception of African men in African literature into two types, including hegemonic and alternative masculinities. Moreover, Mutunda argues that the male characters' switching from non-hegemonic to that of dominance over women in the novels is a deliberate choice to suit their own interests.

This research reconfigures existing interpretive approaches, which unproblematically insist on their proclivity towards the privilege of hegemonic masculinity and its relation to patriarchy. The intersection between patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity, I believe, will challenge previous assumptions and generalisations about masculinism in West African women's writing.[61] This study's aim is not to wholeheartedly refute the findings of these studies, but to offer a more nuanced, complex analysis of the novelists' portrayals of male characters' victimisation, drawing insights from masculinity studies and postcolonial theory. Unlike existing research, this study sheds light on depictions of cases in which Sub-Saharan African men are similarly constrained by patriarchal expectations and troubled by the ideals of hegemonic masculinity across time. In this thesis, I am specifically concerned with portrayals of men's experiences in marriage to unearth how patriarchal expectations provoke troubled male-female relations and trigger feelings of anxiety, humiliation, and bewilderment.

In terms of homogeneity, Winifred Woodhull, for instance, notes the dangers of writing on women as if they were one homogenous group, which she considers a highly reductive approach.[62] Similarly, Nikki Hitchcott observes the impossibility of alluding to a 'pan-African' identity, which leads to a persistent critical tendency to reduce the post-

[61] Masculinism is not a term that is widely used or accepted in scholarly work in English. The only exception to this rule, perhaps, is its use to mean 'masculinist discourse', alluding to patriarchy and male-dominated society. This word, therefore, nearly always expresses a strong anti-women connotation, or at least the idea of safeguarding male privilege.

[62] Winifred Woodhull, *Transfigurations of the Maghreb: Feminism, Decolonization, and Literatures* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. 1-2.

colonial subject to a limiting category, which does not permit a more accurate consideration of ethnic, cultural, social, racial, national, and political identities (7).[63] Though both Woodhull and Hitchcott's observations offer critical analysis of women's condition, the same might also be argued of writing on men's condition in West Africa. Miescher and Lindsay argue that most Africanist historiography has "centred on men's experiences and assumed that they are 'universal', therefore illustrating a lack of critical engagement with what we understand by 'masculinity'" (Miescher, Lindsay 4).[64] In contrast, my analysis of masculinity focuses on hegemonic masculinity in relation to patriarchy and its negative impact on other types of masculinity; subordinate and marginalised, by taking into account the specificities of each context while highlighting commonalities across the West African region.

Another cluster of commentators have addressed the redefinition of African masculinity in women's literature in Africa as an outcome of colonialism. For instance, Ennin, in "Aidoo's Men: Subverting Traditional Masculinity in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes: A Love Story*" (2012) and Nii Okain Teiko in "Changing Conceptions of Masculinity in the Marital Landscape of Africa A Study of Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes* and Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*" (2017) provide an examination of subverting and reformulating traditional masculinity by female novelists. Ennin analyses the three male characters in Aidoo's novel and argues that traditional images of masculinity, as "a source of power and agency are subverted in the most masculinized of public spheres- marriage", where male characters are trapped in a dilemma between tradition and modernity.[65] Similarly, Teiko examines the recreation of masculinity in the context of marriage in both Emecheta's and Aidoo's novels, noting that their novels

[63] Nicki Hitchcott, *Women Writers in Francophone Africa* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2000), p. 7.
[64] Miescher, 'Introduction', *Men and Masculinities*, p. 4.
[65] Ennin, 'Aidoo's Men', p. 61.

depict a hybridism of masculinities in the context of marriage, in which both male female characters strive to maintain a balance between traditional African roles as husbands/wives, fathers/mothers, and an imitated Eurocentric display of love and affection in performing their roles.[66]

While I agree that colonialism is fundamentally linked to shifting notions of masculinities, my study recalibrates the complexity of subverting hegemonic masculinity in Sub-Saharan Africa as portrayed in the chosen novels. I believe that an intrinsic feature of hegemonic masculinity in the novels is the inevitable vacillation between traditional norms and alternative modes of masculinity construction. As colonialism constructs and reconstructs society in the most traumatic of ways, the novels under scrutiny reveal the fundamental instability of categories of gender in a domestic context, and it is particularly the meaning of being a man, husband, and father which is constantly being renegotiated. Therefore, I argue that the novels' redefinition of hegemonic masculinity is not an easy process, instead being riddled with complexity. Indeed, the corpus under study challenges conventional ideals of hegemonic masculinity as the ultimate route to attaining manhood and recognition in society. Instead, the texts grapple with the complexities of hegemonic masculinity, including the diverse issues of emasculation, anxiety, humiliation, and torment.

Furthermore, at the heart of this study is the attempt to avoid the pitfalls of early critics by focussing on the novels' literariness. Studies of masculinity in African literature have predominantly been focused on the sociology of literature and not on its distinctive poetics, which I believe diminishes the novels' artistic merit. For instance, critics like Ennin and Teiko do not pay attention to the literary techniques used by Emecheta and Aidoo in their subversion of masculinity. Therefore, this methodological approach, I

[66] Teiko, 'Changing Conceptions of Masculinity'.

think, reclaims the artistic value of the literary texts. Though this study could have been sociological or anthropological, literary analysis, as well as the study of fictional representations of masculinity, allows me to investigate masculinity in this way, which other disciplines do not permit. For example, literature is important for it enables to examine the intersectional nature of masculinity in the texts as well as the psychological impact of hegemonic masculinity on the male characters' psyches.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

This project falls within the purview of masculinity studies. In its broad sense, masculinity studies, which emerged in the 1990s, is a relatively new field concerned with revealing and interrogating the constructions and dynamics of gender in order to make masculinities visible and problematize the position of men in various social, cultural, and historical contexts. Thus, to reveal that men and masculinities are gendered, masculinities studies places men at the centre of inquiry. In the context of this study, drawing on masculinity studies is essential to examine the male characters under study as gendered categories and unearth their experiences in the context of marriage given the chosen writers' varied interests in gender and domestic matters. For instance, I propose that procreation and polygamy, which used to be associated with women's experiences, are also one of the recurrent masculine issues across the novels. By doing so, I hope to reveal that men and the concept of masculinity should not be treated as unproblematic, ahistorical, or natural categories, but rather – like femininity – masculinities must be seen as constructed within cultural discourses, intersectional, complex, and fluid.

Moreover, in the case of the novels under scrutiny, one area of interdependence between feminist scholarship and masculinity studies is seen in the female novelists' deconstruction of patriarchal demands which constrain the male and female characters

alike. Masculinity critics' main aim behind the emphasis on men and masculinities is that they seek to bring to the fore overlooked issues such as: power, inequity, domination, and subordination. This focus has the potential to contribute productively to the aims of feminist theory, namely the establishment of gender equality between sexes. Christine Beasley purports, for instance, that "rendering gender and masculinity visible offers a challenge to existing power relations and their continuing reiteration", a core component of feminist theory.[67] Similarly, Nancy Dowd considers that focusing specifically on men and masculinity, "reveals a more complex portrait of men but also enhances the understanding of the construction of gender for women".[68] For Michael S. Kimmel, "to speak and write about gender is to enter a political discourse, to become engaged with power and resistance. It is about the resources that maintain power, the symbolic props that extend power, and the ideological apparatuses that develop to sustain and legitimate power".[69] Masculinity studies, then, is, as Dowd argues, "consistent with feminists' dedication to unravelling and diminishing (or ending) gender inequality".[70] My discussion reflects upon the authors' engagement with the troubled male-female relationships triggered by the prevalence of patriarchy across time. Thus, masculinity studies serve to question the traditional patriarchal images of manhood in the novels; a situation, I believe, calls for both feminist and masculinist readings of the texts.

Another factor which feeds into our critical perception of the selected novels is the issue of power and privilege, which is linked to West African patriarchal norms and colonialism. In other words, the study of men and masculinities requires an examination beyond gender for its intersections with other social divisions:

---

[67] Beasley, Christine, 'Rethinking Hegemonic Masculinity in a Globalizing World', *Men and Masculinities*, 11 (2008), p. 87.
[68] Dowd, *Man Question, p. 5.*
[69] Kimmel, Michael S., 'Invisible Masculinity', *Society*, 30.6 (1993), p. 30 <ERIC - EJ472020 - Invisible Masculinity., Society, 1993 (ed.gov)> [accessed 1 April 2017]
[70] Dowd, *Man Question*, p. 149.

> Although men and masculinities are the explicit focus and are understood as explicitly gendered, men and masculinities are not formed by gender alone… men and masculinities are shaped by differences of age, by class situation, by ethnicity and racialization, and so on. The gendering of men only exists in the intersections with other social divisions and social difference.[71]

Connell argues that to understand gender "we must constantly go beyond gender. The same applies in reverse. We cannot understand class, race or global inequality without constantly moving towards gender".[72] On the whole then, an examination of men and masculinities cannot be comprehended without reference to other social divisions. I contend that understanding the frailty of masculinity as presented in the characters' undergoing crises of identity makes it pertinent to explore masculinity as a conceptual framework characterized by its intersectional nature. Hence, my project highlights the merits of literary analysis to bring to the fore all of these intersections by addressing different forms of hegemonic masculinity in the novels, including sexuality, capitalism, and race. These social forces are seen to have a great impact on the male characters' agency and relationships with the female subjects. For instance, my study engages with the issue of race in the third chapter to expose the extent négritude, a form of resistance to assimilating into French culture, is equally related to the Wolof patriarchal norms.[73]

In addition to taking into account its relational nature, this study engages with masculinity in regard to relations of difference and 'othering' between the male

[71] Kimmel, 'Introduction' in *Handbook of Studies*, p. 3.
[72] Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 76.
[73] Négritude refers to the anti-colonial cultural and political movement founded by a group of African and Caribbean intellectuals, writers, and politicians in Paris in the 1930s who sought to reclaim the value of blackness and African culture.

characters. Although masculinity is socially and culturally constructed, it is difficult to determine its origins. Todd Reeser establishes that masculinity is "far too wide-spread, diffuse, and complicated for any single person or group to create it. Because it infuses everything, one cannot ultimately determine its origin".[74] In addition, masculinity is not a static identity, but fluid, "masculinity is not a fixed entity embedded in the body or personality traits of individuals".[75] This constant flux has led to a difficulty and even a contradiction in its definition. However, R.W. Connell offers a useful analysis for how we might approach it establishing useful and working definitions. She writes:

> Rather than attempting to define masculinity as an object (a natural character type, a behavioral average, a norm), we need to focus on the processes and relationships through which men and women conduct gendered lives. 'Masculinity', to the extent the term can be briefly defined at all, is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of those practices in bodily experience, personality and culture.[76]

Sander Gilman posits that difference "is that which threatens order and control – it is the polar opposite to our group. The mental representation of difference is but the projection of the tension between control and its loss present within each individual in every group. That tension produces anxiety that is given shape as the Other".[77] These relations of

[74] Todd W. Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory: An Introduction* (Chichester: UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p.17.
[75] Robert W. Connell, and James W. Messerschmidt, 'Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept', *Gender and Society*, 19.6 (2005), p. 836 <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0891243205278639>
[76] Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 71.
[77] Sander L. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 21.

difference are best understood within frameworks of power, where masculinity operates as a means of policing who is "like us" and who is different, thereby establishing who should have access to power and who should not. In this way, masculinity is inherently relational. Not only does it "not exist except in contrast with 'femininity'", but it also exists in contrast to forms of masculinity that are perceived as "less than" or Other.[78] Indeed, I contend that the male characters' tensions are shown to be attributed to the damaging effects of differentiation and 'othering'.[79] As it is the case across the novels, the male characters who do not conform to their societies' standards of manhood suffer from gossip, laughter, and pressures from the family. Consequently, labelling them as the 'unmen' torments their consciousness and leads to their tragic ends.

Therefore, the project engages with the multiple types of masculinities developed by R.W Connell. They include hegemonic, subordinate, complicit, and marginalized forms of masculinity. Connell introduced hegemonic masculinity, a concept that is, as Christine Beasley points out, "virtually omnipresent in masculinity studies literature" (88).[80] In its earliest formulation, hegemonic masculinity:

[78] Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 68.

[79] It is imperative to note that 'othering' does also apply to the colonizer-colonised binary opposition. A colonised man like Nnaife in chapter two is seen to internalise his inferiority compared to his white masters. The same issue is experienced by Ousmane, as discussed in the third chapter. His refusal to talk about his origins to the white girl Mireille highlights a kind of inferiority complex, an issue that leads him to assimilate to the French culture. Robert Morrell and Lahoucine Ouzgane argue that this 'othering' pathologizes the African and instils a belief in European superiority. Morrell, 'African Masculinities: An Introduction', *African Masculinities,* p. 10.

[80] This is not to say that the concept of hegemonic masculinity has not itself received criticism. John MacInnes in his book *The End of Masculinity: The Confusion of Sexual Genesis and Sexual Difference in Modern Society (1998),* incisively argues that "significantly, he [Connell] nowhere attempts an empirical definition". John MacInnes, *The End of Masculinity: The Confusion of Sexual Genesis and Sexual Difference in Modern Society* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1998) p. 14. Likewise, Jeff Hearn suggests that there are "persistent question marks around what is actually to count as hegemonic masculinity". *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities,* ed. by Michael S. Kimmel, Robert. W Connell, and Jeff Hearn (London: Sage, 2005), p. 58. Connell's conceptualisation of hegemonic masculinity, therefore, comes under attack for being imprecise and undefined.

> Was understood as the pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men's dominance over women to continue…, [it] was distinguished from other masculinities…, [it] was not assumed to be normal in the statistical sense; only a minority of men might enact it. But it was certainly normative. It embodied the currently most honored way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men (Connell & Messerschmidt 832).[81]

Connell later provides another definition of hegemonic masculinity as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women".[82] Similarly, Robert Morrell describes it as a "question of relations of cultural domination," and notes that "in addition to oppressing women, hegemonic masculinity silences or subordinates other masculinities, positioning these in relation to itself such that the values expressed by these other masculinities are not those that have currency or legitimacy".[83] Despite the difference in its definition, the concept of hegemonic masculinity remains useful in understanding gender relations based on power, legitimacy, and hierarchy, not only in relation to women, but also to other men. Among its basic features is the acknowledgement of a plurality and hierarchy of masculinities wherein "certain masculinities are more socially central or more associated with authority and social power than others".[84] This concept, while

[81] Connell, 'Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept', p. 382.

[82] Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 77.
[83] Robert Morrell, 'Of Boys and Men: Masculinity and Gender in Southern African Studies', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 24.4 (1998), p. 608 <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057079808708593>
[84] Connell, 'Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept', p. 846.

enabling us to reflect on characters' struggle to meet the society's expectations and maintain their roles as husbands and fathers, also signals the intricacy of their dilemma as well. Hence, I argue that the narratives under study do not promote models of masculinity (except for Lamine in Bâ's *Scarlet Song*) but indicate the difficulty to maintain strong male-female and familial relations while conforming to patriarchal norms and coping with colonialism, post-colonialism, and modernity.

Relevant to this study is also Connell's addressing of subordinated/marginalized masculinities. Connell writes that marginalization refers to "the relations between the masculinities in dominant and subordinated classes or ethnic groups. Marginalization is always relative to the authorization of the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant group" (81).[85] Thus, my discussion of masculinity in the novels makes clear that there is no masculinity, but, rather, masculinities. Specifically, across the chapters, I focus on the two types: hegemonic and subordinated/marginalized masculinity. Basically, the assumption that masculinity is not homogenous helps to reveal the convergent and complex experiences of the male characters in the novels; thus, it helps to address the problem of literary critics' perception of Sub-Saharan masculinities as homogenous. Besides, highlighting the relationship between masculinities challenges, I believe, the existing scholarship on the selected texts and masculinity. While critics like Nii Okain Teiko argue that that both Aidoo and Emecheta (in the novels selected for this study) depict subverted masculinities in the context of marriage to exhibit a hybrid of African and European forms, I contend that these narratives portray Nnaife and Oko as representatives of marginalised/subordinate masculinities.[86] Their crises, I argue, are generated by tensions and fragmentations, which are shown to be inherent in the

[85] Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 81.
[86] Teiko, 'Changing Conceptions of Masculinity', p. 334.

characters' identities as colonised and post-colonial men rather than depicting hybridity as an easy process or a matter of personal choice.

Across my thesis, I argue that in addition to Connell's concepts, the novels must be read in the light of a range of related material from studies of masculinity in Africa for theoretical insights.[87] Certainly such insights apply to colonized and indigenous contexts, as my study deals with specific cultural norms and practices as well as foreign forces that influence the male characters' behaviours and subjective identities. The concept of hegemonic masculinity based on Connell's conceptions has been criticized for not taking into consideration the experiences of men in the global south. Andrea Cornwall notes:

> While the notion of 'hegemonic masculinity' may serve as a useful way of exploring identities in an era where influences were more limited, the very fluidity and hybridity of contemporary identities reveal its instability. Plural versions of what 'to be a man' can or should involve suggest, in turn, less a distinction between a 'hegemonic masculinity' and other residual variants than a spectrum of ways of being that are more or less valued by different kinds of people.[88]

[87] For instance, Lahoucine Ouzgane has written on masculinity in the Islamic world and in Africa, drawing on masculinity studies from the West, as well as sociological theory on Islamic countries, in order to highlight the gendered hierarchy that exists in the fiction of Tahar Ben Jelloun and the eminent Egyptian doctor, politician, feminist and writer Nawal El Saadawi in particular. See Lahoucine Ouzgane, 'The Rape Continuum: Masculinities in The Works of Nawal Alsaadawi and Ben Jelloun', in *Men in African Film and Fiction* (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2011), p. 68-80. See also, *Islamic Masculinities*, ed. by Lahoucine Ouzgane (London; New York: Zed Books, 2006).

[88] *Dislocating Masculinity: Comparative Ethnographies*, ed. by Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfarne (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 244.

In *Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa* (2003), Lisa Lindsay and Stephan Miescher warn that, "studying masculinity in African situations requires using Connell's model with caution" because:

> In colonial Africa it was not always obvious which notions of masculinity were dominant, or hegemonic, since understandings of gender depend on the specific context and on different actors' subject positions. The limited power of colonial ideologies, combined with the social flux created by new constraints and opportunities, mean that a multiplicity of competing masculine identities promoted sometimes divergent images of proper male behavior within certain contexts.[89]

Indeed, men's experiences in the South differ from those in the North. Thus, context is a crucial factor in defining masculine identities. I argue, similarly to Robert Morrell, Lisa Lindsay, and Stephan Miescher, that in Africa it is not always clear which notion of masculinity is dominant, since it depends on specific contexts.[90] Besides, in one context, we can find several images of proper male behaviour in "which various hegemonic models can coexist".[91] Similarly, in the novels, it is important to examine the various expectations placed on the male characters in each context to avoid homogenization.

While drawing predominantly from masculinity studies, this project also engages with postcolonial theory as it enables to examine representations of masculinity from the period of colonialism onwards. I argue that, in the context of power, privilege, and inequality, masculinity studies not only contribute to feminism, but also to other

[89] Lindsay, *Men and Masculinities*, p. 6.
[90] Ibid.,
[91] Cornwall, *Dislocating Masculinity*, p. 20.

disciplines, such as postcolonial theory, as it similarly deals with issues of dominance and oppression. For instance, I borrow insights from Frantz Fanon's conceptualization of the colonized 'inferiority complex' in his book *The Wretched of the Earth* (1986) [originally *Les Damnés de la Terre* (1961)], which I discuss in the second and third chapters.[92] This is essential to unearth the complexity and the divergent challenges of conforming to hegemonic masculinity as a colonized or a post-colonial man, foregrounding the instability and fragmentations experienced by the male characters.

Thesis Outline

I have devised a structure consisting of five chapters as case studies that explore representations of West African masculinities across Nigeria, Senegal, and Ghana and chronologically, ranging from pre-colonial; colonial; post-colonial; modern; to the contemporary period. This structure allows this research to use an inclusive historical approach, which helps in evading generalizations that might lead to, inadvertently, overlooking the limits of hegemonic masculinity, such as the perpetuation of pre-colonial patriarchal norms, which marks a vital contribution to this study.

The specific structure offers thematic diversity to this study, in terms of male infertility, polygamy, gender roles, assimilation, and sexuality, and enables me to examine how the narratives engage with different social and foreign forces, either colonialism, post-colonialism, or modernity, which together illuminate representations of oppressed masculinities from the pre-colonial to the contemporary period. This focus endows this research with more focus and allows me to bestow equal attention to what it

[92] Frantz Fanon is considered one of the forerunners of postcolonial theory. Perhaps his best-known work is *The Wretched of the Earth* (first published in French in 1961 and translated in 1963). Despite his brief life, his work has had a tangible influence on other postcolonial critics and theorists, such as Homi Bhabha. Fanon himself was influenced by Jean-Paul Sartre, the famous French writer, playwright and philosopher. See, Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. by C. Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1986 [1963]).

means to be a man in Nigeria, Senegal, and Ghana, how male identities are shaped, influenced, and negotiated, as well as the crises generated by the constant expectations of hegemonic masculinity. I am aware that these diverse themes and settings may reflect a hint of homogenization. Therefore, I have narrowed down my focus to particular thematic concerns in every specific context as depicted in each novel. Finally, although the chapters have been grouped historically and thematically, they inform one another and serve the thesis' overarching argument, which explores representations of recurrent and emerging tensions in Sub-Saharan masculinity from the pre-colonial to contemporary period. In the first chapter, I focus solely on depictions of pre-colonial Nigerian norms and their detrimental effects on male characters. The following chapters proceed to highlight the intersection of patriarchy with other social and foreign influences, which allows me to reflect the destabilisation of Sub-Saharan masculinities since the onset of colonialism.

Chapter one deals with Flora Nwapa's depiction of pre-colonial masculinity, looking at the portrayal of the devastating effects of the Nigerian pre-colonial association of hegemonic masculinity with procreation in her second novel *Idu* (1970). In this chapter, I investigate the theme of male infertility in the specific context of pre-colonial Igbo community; for this reason, I deem it necessary to analyse the ways in which the upholding of pre-colonial indigenous norms shape the way the narrative deploy direct discourse to depict a community that is pre-dominantly defined with gossip and inflexibility. In this chapter, I argue that the rigid expectation of male reproduction proves to be harmful, too powerful to be resisted, dehumanising, and tragic. The opening section of the first chapter sheds light into the different ways in which direct discourse shapes Nwapa's representation of the great sense of fear and shame associated with gossip and male childlessness. Having thus fleshed out the symbolic function of gossip, the second

section provides a textured and detailed engagement with Nwapa's ironic insights into the issue of polygamy. I posit that Nwapa presents the community's suggestion of polygamy as destructive, culminating in Adiewere's further anxiety. Therefore, instead of averting tragedy, these insights instigate it. The last section engages more with Nwapa's deployment of tragedy to deflate the dehumanisation experienced by infertile men, like Amarajeme. I also suggest that Amarajeme is presented as a tragic character; an over-achiever who attempts to overcome his sterility through illusion and plunges recklessly into a void of self- destruction. The novel, while illuminating Amarajeme's tragic flaw, contests pre-colonial indigenous constructions of manhood in the Igbo society around male procreation.

Having dealt with pre-colonial Nigerian masculinity in the previous chapter, the second chapter focuses on the issue of male instability and bewilderment during Nigeria's colonial period in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979). My aim here is to explore Emecheta's depiction of a fracture in Nigerian masculinity in an urban setting generated by both the colonial history and a perpetuation of pre-colonial Nigerian patriarchal norms. In this chapter, I argue that Emecheta uses irony and tragedy to represent Nnaife's confusion and fragmentation as a result of being, simultaneously, colonised and traditional in a colonial urban setting. In the first section, I suggest that Emecheta's use of irony is significant for it efficiently highlights Nnaife's failed expectations to improve his life because of the poor economic conditions in colonial Lagos. I contend that despite several attempts, Nnaife's emasculation by the coloniser hinders his conformity to traditionally received normative gender roles and perceptions of masculinity of his agrarian village, Ibuza. I also illustrate that Nnaife is deployed by Emecheta as a subordinate man not only to complicate colonial constructions of masculinity, but also to interrogate traditional impositions of polygamy. In the second

section, I foreground the ways in which tragedy, as a literary mechanism, dovetails into Emecheta's interrogation of both traditional impositions of polygamy and Nnaife's inflexibility, revealing the challenges of being traditional in a colonial setting. In this way, the novel provides the ground to analyse the portrayal of the negative consequences of the intersecting forces of colonialism and indigenous norms on men and traditional gender roles in an urban setting.

While chapter two is concerned with the depiction of the fragmentation provoked by the inconsistency between pre-colonial norms and colonial impositions, chapter three moves to the post-independence period to investigate the representation of the persisting disorientation even after independence. This chapter is devoted to the examination of the legacy of French colonialism and its clash with négritude in Bâ's *Scarlet Song* (1986). This chapter argues that a balance between négritude and universalism is presented as a more meaningful way of engaging with the expectations of post-colonial Wolof masculinity. By the concept of universalism, I refer to the belief that culture is universal. I contend that Bâ presents her male protagonist, Ousmane, as a disoriented post-colonial Senegalese young man and recounts his failed attempt to restore his agency and resolve his dilemma through assimilation to French Western culture as well as a later return to négritude. In the opening section, I argue that through the use of irony, *Scarlet Song* thematises the paralysing effects of subverting Wolof norms and adopting French assimilation in search of self-fulfilment. In the second section, I illustrate that narrative technique serves to uncover the fluctuation of post-colonial Wolof masculinity through Ousmane returns to négritude as a source of male African pride and post-colonial resistance to French colonial assimilation. In my third and final section, I further discuss Bâ's deployment of tragedy to dramatize Ousmane's persistent crisis even after his return to his origins. I will show that these two techniques expose the flaw with being obsessed

with négritude in post-colonial Senegal. Instead, I posit that the novel suggests that taking a more balanced stance on négritude and assimilation leads to self-fulfilment, offering the possibility of a harmonious inter-racial marriage.

Chapter four builds on the previous chapter and continues to scrutinize the fluctuation of post-colonial West African masculinity while discussing the representation of a problematic male interaction with the 'new woman' due to the incompatibility between traditional patriarchal expectations and modernity in Aidoo's *Changes* (1981). This chapter differs from chapter three in the sense that it critically examines masculinity construction in modern Ghana in the 1980s and considers the influence of male-female dynamics, family interference, and homosociality on Ghanaian masculinity. By the concept of homosociality, I refer to male-male relations, excluding homosexuality. Hence, I stress that the male protagonist Oko is shown to be trapped between embracing modernity and conforming with traditional Ghanaian patriarchy.[93] Discussing irony, I explore the narrative's depiction of modern Ghanaian masculinity as re-defined but simultaneously connected to traditional patriarchal norms. Key to this argument is drawing attention to how Aidoo's *Changes* presents a crisis of masculinity in modern Ghana, which hinges on the inability of patriarchal values to shift and cope with modernity. In the first section, I lay out the various ways in which the use of narrative perspective illuminates Oko's psychological crisis and dilemma between tradition and modernity. Crisis, in this novel, consists of Oko's feeling of shame and emasculation provoked by family interference and homosociality. In the second section, I further explore Aidoo's use of irony to foreground how Oko's shift into traditional masculinity is conversely damaging and tragic. My aim here is to show that Oko's resort to sexual

[93] I use the concept of 'modernity' specifically to refer to the novel's representation of the changes that took place in Ghana in the 1980s. Focusing on the socio-historical context of the novel aids in determining the fictional constructions of masculinity in several ways.

violence against his wife does not restore his manhood but leads to his marriage breakdown. In this respect, I argue that Aidoo favors flexibility in gender roles to cope with modernity while vehemently contesting family's and friends' interference which symbolize the tenacity of patriarchal values in modern Ghana.

The last chapter elaborates on the tragic effects of constructing contemporary Nigerian masculinity based on pre-colonial notions of virility and fatherhood in Ayobami Adebayo's debut novel *Stay With Me* (2017). In this chapter, I will focus on Adebayo's portrayal of the mother's role in maintaining pre-colonial Nigerian norms and its tragic outcomes on her son. The objective here is to go beyond Akin's sexual impotency, to stress his distress provoked by his mother's attachment to pre-colonial norms. Hence, I argue that Akin's crisis and tragedy are mostly triggered by succumbing to his mother's upholding of pre-colonial beliefs on virility and fatherhood rather than by his sexual impotency itself. In the first section, I lay out the various ways in which pre-colonial ideals of manhood intersects with contemporary Nigerian beliefs on marriage, polygamy and procreation. I argue that Adebayo depicts Akin's dilemma as an impotent man, husband, and son. I contend that Akin is shown to have contemporary views on marriage, love, and polygamy, while he also realises the inevitability of disengaging himself from his mother's pressures to attain hegemonic masculinity. This aspect, which I discuss in the first section, is reflected in the novel through the strategic use of the first-person narrative (alternating between Akin and his wife Yejide) In the second section, I argue that the irony and tragedy together demonstrate that Akin's submitting to his mother's traditional expectations turns out to be unsatisfactory, deceptive, and tragic. In this regard, I suggest that the novel criticizes Akin's clinging to hegemonic masculinity as it destroys him as well as his relationship with his wife and brother. In the final section of this chapter, I contend that through character foils, Adebayo responds to this tendency by

redefining the traditional notion of paternity from a sperm donation to caring and experiencing the joys of fatherhood.

Finally, I propose that this thesis demonstrates that hegemonic masculinity is not simply glorified by the selected West African female novelists but is represented as being inherently fragile and a burden to all characters. Ultimately, the female authors show great concern with divergent and compatible male issues, an argument which deflects the commonly held conceptions which underrate the limits of hegemonic masculinity. The chapters illustrate a cluster of recurrent and emerging factors which mark the intersection of Sub-Saharan hegemonic masculinity with the prevalence of pre-colonial patriarchal norms and other forces since the onset of colonialism. These factors, especially the analogous and contrasting modes of engagement with hegemonic masculinity, dovetail into the way in which ideals of masculinity are constructed in specific contexts and periods as portrayed across the narratives. Given the fluid and intersectional nature of masculinity, the male characters' masculinities are shown to be in an oscillating flux between conformity and disconformity, highlighting their collective feelings of anxiety, bewilderment, and humiliation. Lastly, with their commonalities and diversities, I believe that the textual narratives complement each other and offer inherently multifarious alternative modes of engagement with representations of masculinity, which is portrayed as variable and invariable, dynamic and static.

Chapter 1. Fatherhood and Masculine Otherness in Pre-colonial Nigerian Ibo community

Introduction

The Nigerian writer Flora Nwapa is an iconoclastic female novelist, whose work emerged during the first phase of African female writers in their attempt to produce a balanced image of the African woman. Despite Nwapa's interest in issues relating to women, she rejected the label 'feminist' and preferred to identify with Alice Walker's term 'womanist'.[1] In a conversation with Marie Umeh, Nwapa refutes the critic Katherine Frank's description of her as a radical feminist in an article entitled 'Women Without Men: The Feminist Novel in Africa'. Nwapa responds:

> I don't think that I'm a radical feminist. I don't even accept that I'm a feminist. I accept that I'm an ordinary woman who is writing about what she knows. I try to project the image of women positively. I attempt to correct our men folks when they started writing, when they wrote little or less about women, where their female characters are prostitutes and ne'er-do-wells. I started writing to tell them that this is not so. When I do write about women in Nigeria, in Africa, I try to paint a positive picture about women because there are many women who are very, very positive in their thinking, who are very, very independent, and very industrious.[2]

[1] In an interview with Alison Perry in London, Flora Nwapa describes herself as a 'womanist', thereby identifying with Alice Walker's term Womanism, a concept formulated by Alice Walker which is black-centred, advocates an end to sexism and a meaningful relationship between black women and men, and children. Alison, Perry, 'Meeting Flora Nwapa', *West Africa* (18 June 1984), 1262. See Walker's definition of 'womanist' in the preface of her book *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*. Alice, Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt, 1983).

[2] Marie Umeh and Flora Nwapa, 'The Poetics of Economic Independence for Female Empowerment: An Interview with Flora Nwapa', *Research in African Literatures*, Summer, Vol. 26, No. 2, (Indiana University Press 1995) 22-29 (p.27) https://www.jstor.org/stable/3820268.

Nwapa's womanism is not only apparent in her positive portrayal of women, but also in her valorisation of the complementary role between men and women. In *Idu,* for instance both Adiewere and Idu work hard to build their house. Moreover, she realistically portrays how hegemonic masculinity affects negatively some men and women.

In addition to her womanism, Nwapa's writing is heavily influenced by oral traditions. Nwapa contends that "if she is considered the doyenne of African female writers, the glory goes to the oral historians and griots who mesmerized her with stories about the mystical powers of Ogbuide, the mother of the lake, her family members of industrious women and men who served as role models, as well as her penchant for service and the pursuit of excellence".[3] Such influence is evident in Nwapa's motivation to subvert Igbo culture's valorisation of procreation, as a source of fulfilment for the Igbo woman, such as in *Efuru* (1966), *One is Enough* (1981), and *Women Are Different* (1986).[4] Notwithstanding, in her second novel *Idu* (1970), Nwapa turns her attention not only to in/fertile women, but also to sterile men, by giving considerable attention to issues of masculinity.[5] Ultimately, Nwapa makes us recognize that an exploration of the issue of male childlessness is necessary if we are to fully understand the gender issues undergirding her second novel, *Idu*. The portrayals of male characters, in *Idu,* illustrate salient pre-colonial models of West African masculinities that inform later

[3] Marie Umeh and Flora Nwapa, 'The Poetics of Economic Independence', p. 24

[4] Alongside the Kenyan author Grace Ogot, Nwapa is viewed as the first African female writer. They both started their writing career in 1966.

[5] The persistent theme of childlessness, as a crisis point in the domestic Igbo system, indicates that Nwapa is continuously concerned with the problem of infertility. See, Flora Nwapa, *Efuru* (London: Heinemann, 1966), Flora Nwapa, *Idu* (London, Heinemann, 1970), and Flora Nwapa, *Women Are Different* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1992). As in *Efuru, Idu, and Women Are Different*, in *One Is Enough* (1981), 'bareness' is depicted as a crisis point. However, as Stephanie Newell argues, in Nwapa's short novel, *One Is Enough* (1981), another different Nwapa emerges, "rejecting husbands, celebrating the city, and unambiguously affirming single motherhood in an urban setting outside the bounds of marriage". Stephanie Newell, 'Feminism and the Complex Space of Women's Writing', in *West African Literatures: Ways of Reading* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 153.

representations of masculinity by the selected female novelists from the pre-colonial to the contemporary period.[6]

Idu, has frequently been submitted to feminist analyses. Much of the criticism written on Nwapa's work has been justifiably influenced by feminist perspectives because of the woman-centered nature of her fiction.[7] As a result, it would be quite difficult to argue that the novel is not feminist.[8] Indeed, in one of her interviews, Nwapa herself has acknowledged that the main reason of her writing is to write women's stories.[9] The themes of gender, the lives, and roles of women in society, the effects of patriarchy on

[6] In order to grasp an understanding of the portrayals of the similarities, differences, and diverse complexities of West African masculinities across time, I believe it is vital to explore constructions of pre-colonial masculinities. For instance, in this chapter, I pay attention to pre-colonial indigenous norms, the role of the community, and how Nwapa depicts village men's diverse ways of negotiating with rural Igbo gender roles.

[7] See Elleke Boehmer, 'Stories of Women and Mothers: Gender and Nationalism in the Early Fiction of Flora Nwapa', in *Stories of Women: Gender and Narrative in Post-colonial Nation* (Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 2005). She discusses Nwapa's representations of powerful, rebellious, and self-reliant female characters in both *Efuru* and *Idu*. See also Jean Wilson, 'Representations of Female Experience in The Novels Of Post-Colonial West African Writers: Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, And Mariama Bâ' (doctoral thesis, University of Wollongong, 1997) "Representations of female experience in the novels of post-colonial We" by Jean Wilson (uow.edu.au) [accessed 09 September 2017]. Wilson examines the experiences of major female characters in the novels. She argues that Nwapa subverts the dominant representation of the Igbo woman as "the eternal mother" in her second novel *Idu* in which the heroine prefers love for her husband over maternal love. See also, Mary D. Mears, 'Choice and discovery: An analysis of women and culture in Flora Nwapa 's fiction' (doctoral thesis, University of South Florida, 2009). Mears explores from a feminist and dialogic perspective what choice and discovery mean for women in Nwapa's *Efuru* (1966), *Idu* (1970), and *One is Enough* (1981). Mears argues that Nwapa posits the women's desires for change, choice, and acceptance within Igbo society. Mears also adds that the women in Nwapa's novels speak to the needs of both collective and individual female identity within their culture. Ikonne Chidi, 'The Society and Woman's Quest for Selfhood in Flora Nwapa's Early Novels', *Kunapipi*, 6.1, (1984), 68-78. Chidi examines the female characters' quest for identity in Nwapa's early novels and argues that Nwapa's mode of 'fighting' in the two novels is by no means feminist.

[8] Okonjo Ogunyemi claims that "Nwapa's decision to make a woman the protagonist is not fortuitous, since both sexes feature commonly in the tales". Okonjo Ogunyemi, 'Flora Nwapa: Genesis and Matrix', in *Africa, Wo/Man, Palava: The Nigerian Novel by Women*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 157.

[9] In her writing about the African woman, Nwapa aimed to project "a balanced image of African womanhood" and believed that male writers neglected to point out "the positive side of womanhood". She contends that "Nigerian male writers have in many instances portrayed women negatively or in their subordination to men". 'Women and Creative Writing in Africa: Flora Nwapa' in *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism And Theory*, ed. by Tejumola Olaniyan and Ato Quayson (Oxford: Blackwell publishing, 2007) p. 526-532. See, Gay Wilentz, 'Flora Nwapa, 1931-93', *The Women's Review of Books*, 11.6 (1994), 8 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4021747> [accessed 16 October 2017]. Despite the woman-centred nature of her fiction, Nwapa has refused to call herself a feminist preferring the label womanist instead. See the reasons why African women writers take an anti-feminist standpoint in Newell, *West African Literatures*, p. 148_52. See also, Alison Perry, 'Meeting Flora Nwapa', *West Africa*, (1984). It is necessary to mention that the womanist praxis in Africa does not totally overlap with all Walkerian concepts, such as, for example, lesbianism.

women, and the issues of reproduction and fecundity as a cultural imperative are prominent throughout the novel, *Idu*. In their studies of masculinities in Africa, Robert Morrell and Lahoucine Ouzgane argue that "While a great deal of attention is paid to womanhood and motherhood, there is no equivalent discussion of manhood and fatherhood".[10] Likewise, analysis of male characters' experiences, particularly, the issue of fatherhood, in Nwapa's *Idu*, remains yet to be explored.[11]

Drawing on Nwapa's representations of pre-colonial definitions of West African manhood, I will examine the interrelated ways of the male characters' perception and yet distinctive ways of responding to pre-colonial hegemonic masculinity represented in *Idu.* Moreover, this chapter explores Nwapa's redefinition of the notion of producing children, contestation of polygamy, and interrogation of indigenous pre-colonial constructions of manhood in the novel. Her interrogation of indigenous masculinity constructions encourages us to recognize that representations of contemporary masculinities are constantly linked to pre-colonial patriarchal definitions of manhood, as will be shown throughout the following chapters.

In *Idu*, Nwapa recounts a story of troubled masculinity within marriage and fatherhood in pre-colonial Nigeria. Nwapa portrays the same pressure that African men and women feel to produce children. The two male characters Adiewere and Amarajeme, similarly fret over their manhood, but their lives have divergent fates. Though we are informed that Adiewere has no interest in polygamy, he ends up complying when his

[10] 'African Masculinities: An Introduction', in *African Masculinities: Men in Africa from the Late Nineteenth Century to the Present*, ed. by Robert Morrell and Lahoucine Ouzgane (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 6.

[11] Okonjo Ogunyemi, notes that infertile men are also victims of patriarchy. Okonjo Ogunyemi, 'Flora Nwapa: Genesis and Matrix', in *Africa, Wo/Man, Palava: The Nigerian Novel by Women*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 136. Similarly, Mary D. Mears pays little attention to the experience of the male character Amarajeme. However, the focus of her analysis is more on women's experiences of motherhood than on fatherhood. See, Mears, 'Discovery and Choice', p. 109. Male characters' experience of fatherhood and infertility in Nwapa's work, thus, needs deeper analysis.

wife, Idu, chooses a convincing second wife for him. After a few months of his second marriage, Adiewere's 'manhood' is proved when Idu becomes pregnant. In contrast, Amarajeme is a victim of his own fate and response towards hegemonic masculinity through adopting illusion to overcome his impotency. His wife leaves him and gets impregnated by his friend. At this stage, Amarajeme commits suicide when he discovers that his pride is shaken, constructing him as "other" and inferior to his fellow Igbo men. The novel concludes when Adiewere succumbs to an illness, which simultaneously ends Idu's happy marriage as her husband and the father of her child dies. Deceived by Adiewere's unexpected death, Idu decides to follow him.

1."How can a man live without children?": The Unstable Adiewere between 'Conformity' and 'Resistance'

In the Igbo pre-colonial context addressed in *Idu*, the major expected attribute of being a 'true' man is the male characters' ability to produce children. This presumption of masculinity is, however, subject to several complications, many of which are addressed or suggested in *Idu*. The most highlighted complication in the novel is childlessness and the interfering community members, mainly females, who uphold the forms of masculinity which are seen to oppress the central male and female characters. The novelist succeeds in portraying Adiewere as a complex male figure who is essentially amiable, but still childless. His attempt to reach self-fulfilment through hard work and monogamy correlates with an impossibility of resisting pre-colonial notions of fatherhood. Therefore, *Idu* shows Adiewere, in a constant state of dilemma.

Unlike the other novels I discuss in the next chapters, masculinity, in this novel, is inextricably related to indigenous Igbo ideals without any foreign influence.[12] Similar to Chinua Achebe's narrative *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Nwapa's text recreates the Igbo village past. The novel is set in the Ugwuta community and evokes a vision of the rural setting as an enclave existing beyond the city borders to portray routines and rituals of everyday life within compounds.

However, there are significant differences that exist between Nwapa and other male writers. According to Elleke Boehmer:

> Nwapa's fictions are situated outside traditional, male-centred narrative history. She chooses to engage neither with the manly adventures and public displays of patriarchal authority described by other writers from her community (emblematised in Achebe's Okonkwo), nor with the stylistic conventions of their accounts. Instead, she concentrates, and at length, on what was apparently incidental or simply contextual to male action – domestic matters, the politics of intimacy.[13]

I agree with Boehmer that unlike male writers' concerns about the anti-colonial struggle, Nwapa exhibits an interest in domestic issues such as gender expectations, marriage, infertility, and women's empowerment.[14]

---

[12] The inclusion of old women's commentary on childless couples in the Ugwuta community is one of the features that differentiates Nwapa's novel from the other texts selected in this thesis. As I discuss in the next chapters, changes in community, family, and marriage construction are visible across time. Moreover, colonialism and its legacy have tremendous impact on gender roles, an issue that is not presented in *Idu*.

[13] Elleke Boehmer, 'Stories of Women and Mothers: Gender and Nationalism in the Early Fiction of Flora Nwapa', in *Stories of Women: Gender and Narrative in the Postcolonial Nation* ((Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 95.

[14] Nwapa's lack of interest in politics does not mean that all West African female authors do not exhibit a concern with nationalism. Buchi Emecheta, Ama Ata Aidoo, Ayobami Adebayo, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, to name only few, have written about colonial and postcolonial issues, as well as on the civil wars.

In addition, Nwapa's use of choric language is also of paramount importance as it enabled her to reflect and dramatize pre-colonial Ibo domestic issues by evoking the vocality of women's everyday existence.[15] Indeed, Nwapa's novel offers a direct representation of society and has a direct link with the context it springs from. Nwapa is a realistic novelist writing about the domestic sector of Ibo society. Therefore, in order to study the conversational technique in *Idu*, we should look at Nwapa's influences and the narrative purposes it serves to understand why in her text, men have to produce children or die socially. However, Nwapa's style of writing (relying on conversational techniques) drew a certain amount of negative criticism from critics who viewed it as 'sociological', 'claustrophobic', and generally limited.[16] In contrast to these critics, I would argue, however, far from being a deficiency, this narrative style is unfamiliar to critics, such as Eustace Palmer, and it is this feature that distinguishes her from other African male and female writers. It also empowers her representation of domestic matters. Boehmer suggests that this narrative style is similar to the African American writer Zola Neale Hurston's "recreation of porch-side comment and of gossip on the road".[17] Adding to Boehmer's claim, I argue that the conversational technique signifies that the writer appreciates orality, especially that Nwapa was influenced by the storytelling of old women in her community. As such, while taking us into the compounds' depths, the narrative familiarizes readers with the pre-colonial gender norms of the community and how moral judgments determine male and female identities as well as agencies.

These notions of pre-colonial normative masculinity or what constitutes Ugwuta community's sense of 'true' manhood, unfold from the start of the narrative of *Idu*.

What might differentiate them from male writers, however, is their focus on how political and domestic matters are interrelated.

[15] Ibid., p. 96.

[16] For instance, see, Eustace Palmer, 'Elechi Amadi, The Concubine and Flora Nwapa, Efuru', *African Literature Today*, 1 (1969), 56-8.

[17] Boehmer, 'Stories of Women and Mothers', p. 96.

Through the use of direct monologue, female characters (Nwasobi, Uzoechi, and Onyemuru) present the pre-colonial Igbo society's gender norms as well as the couple Adiewere and Idu, '"but what worries me now is that they still have no child … It's time she was. What's wrong?"' (3). From this quote, it might be deduced that Adiewere and his wife Idu do not lead an independent conjugal life but are subject to gossip and control. Moreover, while these old women are represented as guardians of the Ogwuta community's pre-colonial norms, Adiewere and his wife Idu are shown to be challenging normative notions of masculinity and femininity due to their childlessness. James Olney claims that "the aim of Ibo life is invariable, the same for men as for women: to produce as many legitimate children as possible".[18] Likewise, Nwapa's *Idu* reflects that the beliefs around childlessness affect both men and women. For instance, the female characters articulate the conventional expectations of womanhood, while manhood is hinted at when questioning, '"how can a man live without children? Wasn't it a woman who bore him in her womb?"' (35). In the two rhetorical questions, the motive in the reference to both 'man' and 'woman' is not to mention the cyclical function of reproduction. Rather, it emphasizes on Onyemuru's stress on the necessity to preserve the reciprocal social meaning attached to this function: 'manhood' and 'womanhood'. It can also be noted here that the topic of male procreation is touched upon through allusions. The male body, for instance, is never mentioned in the conversation. Nwapa knows, however, how to exploit the vagaries of natural speech. Malcolm Coulthard wrote that "a successful ethnography of speaking will describe the normative structure of all the speech acts and events of a given speech community … norms, of course, are not always adhered to, and each community has its own rules for interpreting rule-breaking".[19] Indeed, the purpose of

[18] James Olney, *Tell Me Africa: An Approach to African Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 173.
[19] Malcolm, Coulthard, *An introduction to Discourse Analysis*, (London, Longman, 1977), p. 47.

Nwapa's use of rhetorical questions is, exceptionally, to convey the characters' awareness of norms and that they are saying what should remain unspoken for reasons of shame and delicacy. Besides, Adiewere and Idu, just as people in real life, are judged for their adherence to Ibo rules. As such, Nwapa asserts that virility figures powerfully in hegemonic masculinity in pre-colonial Ibo society.

Consequently, the novel pushes to the extreme a sense of male anxiety and fear of humiliation due to the social meaning attached to male fertility as a form of hegemonic masculinity.[20] Adiewere, is presented as anxious and uncertain not only from the start of the novel, but also from the start of his marriage to Idu, "she [Idu] was not pregnant, she had not even miscarried. It had worried her husband in the first year" (16). The implication here is that the image of the childless man that emerges from this novel is that of one tormented. The worry to which the narrator refers to seems to be intensified when Idu has not even miscarried, which would prove Adiewere as a 'real' man. The narrator's reference to 'miscarriage' is significant. The term 'miscarriage' would normally designate 'loss' but in this context, it has a symbolic meaning as a proof of manhood. Therefore, the narrative foregrounds that the absence of both miscarriage and pregnancy culminates in Adiewere's anxiety evident since the first year of his marriage. Reflecting on his fear of failure, this characterization reinforces Morell's suggestion that "in addition to oppressing women, hegemonic masculinity silences or subordinates other masculinities, positioning these in relation to itself such that the values expressed by these

[20] The experience of sterility is not exclusive to African masculinities. Russell E. Webb and and Judith C. Daniluk interviewed infertile American men and found that these experienced a "tremendous blow to their masculine identities". This pain was exemplified through feelings of grief, loss, and isolation. Russell E. Webb and Judith C. Daniluk, 'The End of the Line: Infertile Men's Experience of Being Unable to Produce A Child', *Men and Masculinities*, 2.1 (1999), p. 21 <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1097184X99002001002>. These feelings suggest that male infertility is a universal issue. However, I believe that the issue is more complicated in African societies because of the community-based system and the gender order, both of which this present chapter discusses.

other masculinities are not those that have currency or legitimacy".[21] Through the fear of losing the most defining element of manhood and masculinity, Nwapa affirms that virility is, indeed, the ultimate definer of hegemonic masculinity in this novel.

Also, in the quote: "he was in love with his wife" (16), a tension in Adiewere's feelings can be detected. To begin with, Nwapa uses focalization to reflect how Adiewere is a devoted husband despite his wife's childlessness. Moreover, focalization is effective in revealing how Adiewere's love for Idu enables him to see her from an angle different from that of the old women of the community. For example, the female character Nwasobi interprets the couple's childlessness by putting the blame on Idu, "'Sometimes when a woman starts with money children run away"' (3). According to this perspective, a financially successful woman is a barren woman, foregrounding how the community blames a woman for a fruitless marriage. In contrast to this viewpoint, there is no scene in the novel where Adiewere puts the blame on Idu. Instead of blaming Idu, Adiewere believes that children are in "the hands of God" (15). As it stands, the novel shows that his perception of Idu's worth as a woman is not solely mediated by her reproductive function. Moreover, a degree of openness and comprehension is perceptible in the relationship when he comforts Idu in this quote, '"I don't want you to start crying tonight because you have no child … My mother is dead. My only brother is Ishiodu, and he does not count for much. So don't worry'" (16). In contrast to the harsh treatment Nnu Ego in *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) receives from her first husband, Adiewere is portrayed as a caring husband despite his worrying about his position.

Ironically, Nwapa subverts the old women's viewpoint and concern through the couple's happiness. Despite the fact that Idu and Adiewere do not epitomize Igbo traditional expectations of producing children, the couple is happy. Nwapa aims to reveal

[21] Morell, 'Of Boys and Men', p. 608.

that happiness can be reached without children. She depicts Adiewere's love for Idu as more increasing through time, '"you are as light as a feather. You get lighter and lighter every day, you are very pleasing to my eyes"' (20). Adiewere, in this simile, expresses overtly his continuous admiration of his wife. The lighter she gets, the more he loves her. The comparative description of light ('light', 'lighter', 'lighter') is immediately followed by time ('every day'). This sentence structure is deliberately repeated, foregrounding Adiewere's increasing appreciation ('pleasing') of his wife. This also indicates that Adiewere overlooks Idu's infertility, and he is, instead, interested in her as a woman not a mother figure. Therefore, in his vision, Idu is more important than having children. The couple bond so closely that the old women of the community comment on their happiness, wondering whether Adiewere and Idu quarrel as all couples, "You never see them quarrel. Don't they ever quarrel?"' (2). Their remark reflects the uniqueness of the couple not in that they don't dispute at all, but to highlight that they are careful not to be seen quarrelling by anyone. In this way, the novel subverts the couple's childlessness by happiness and love. Moreover, using irony, Nwapa disrupts the belief that children are everything in life when Idu is so heartbroken on learning of the death of her husband and chooses to die in the same day. Death, here, has a symbolic meaning which is used to highlight that for Adiewere and Idu, marriage is seen in terms of love, appreciation, and faithfulness, rather than procreation and childbearing.

Furthermore, Adiewere's initial attempt to resist the community's norms is reflected in his rejection of polygamy and his belief in time as a feasible resolution to their childlessness.[22] Unlike Charles C. Fonchingong's claim that polygamy "functions as a male preserve to control women's sexuality", Nwapa in this novel foregrounds male

[22] It is worth mentioning that Flora Nwapa is a polygamous wife herself. However, there are no autobiographical elements in her writing, as she confirms to Marie Umeh: "am not like Efuru, neither am I like Idu, neither am I Amaka in any way". Marie Umeh and Flora Nwapa, 'The Poetics of Economic Independence', P. 26.

rejection of polygamy.[23] In the novel, what is suggested by the community's women to solve the problem of male infertility is the possibility of taking a second wife, as it is the norm in the community, '"if Idu can't have a child, let her allow her husband to marry another wife. That's what our people do. There are many girls around"' (33). Yet, as the narrator has mentioned, Adiewere rejects polygamy because "he was in love with his wife" (16). In another episode, the narrator recounts that:

> Many people had advised him to marry another, but he had refused. He was not at heart a polygamist. His father had married only his mother, as he told his friends who wanted him to marry another wife. But his father's one wife was understandable. He was not, by their standards, a rich man. He could not afford a second wife although bride-price was not high in their town. If he could have afforded it, he would have married another wife (16).

As the passage shows, Adiewere refuses polygamy despite his age-group's insistence. In addition, his vision distinguishes him not only from his peers but also from that of his father. In contrast to his father who is depicted as monogamous because of his financial inability, Adiewere is depicted as a rich businessman, but monogamous. Such a comparison foregrounds Adiewere's different perspective towards his childlessness through his patience. In this way, Nwapa allows us to compare Adiewere's personality traits to those of the community's people as well as to his father. Arguably, the novel's reference to the two different generations foregrounds that polygamy is not a generational issue. Both his father and Adiewere's peers think in the same way. This, instead, can be

[23] Charles C., Fonchingong, 'Unbending Gender Narratives' (p. 140)

interpreted as an emphasis on Adiewere's uniqueness, reflecting Nwapa's idealization of his qualities.

In addition, Nwapa's womanist ideology seems to be related to the understanding of masculinity and this can be detected when both Adiewere and Idu work hard and make plans to build their new house together. According to Marie Umah, Nwapa's "honest portrayal of Ugwuta women insists on the complementary nature of Ugwuta society beginning with a mixed-gender age grade system, a mystical Lake Goddess, who guarantees women, as well as men, power, prominence, and peace".[24] Indeed, Nwapa's belief in complementary roles between men and women is evident in the couple' attempt to overcome their childlessness through their focus on the future, '"If trade continues like this till the end of this season, we shall be able to start on our new house. We must start the out-house"' (15). Moreover, it can be viewed as an implicit response to the community's pre-occupation with and valorisation of procreation than anything else.

However, Adiewere's resistance remains limited as the sense of doubt and fear of 'shame' and 'gaze' cannot be diminished. Rather, it persists through time as Idu shows no sign of pregnancy. The same feeling in Adiewere's first year of marriage mentioned by the narrator earlier is still experienced after three years. It is addressed in another episode using a direct monologue and allusion in a scene when Adiewre informs Idu that his brother, Ishiodu, is expecting to have a fourth child. He says, '"am your husband, do you hear? I am the one to get worried, not you … please don't weep tonight, Idu, you know what I feel about this already"' (16). The novel removes the shroud of silence that torments Adiewere's consciousness by revealing his feelings and thoughts about the link

[24] Marie Umeh and Flora Nwapa, 'The Poetics of Economic Independence', p. 24. Nwapa confirms the uniqueness of gender roles in Ugwuta community when she states that "in Ugwuta, women have certain rights that women elsewhere, in other parts of the country, do not have. For instance, in Ugwuta, a woman can break the kola nut where men are. If she is old, or if she has achieved much or if she has paid the bride price for a male relation and that member of the family is there, she can break the kola nut". Ibid.

between producing children and his manhood. Worrying about his wife's childlessness indicates also Adiewere's internalization of the community's norms of manhood. Moreover, Adiewere's emphasis on his position as the 'husband' reveals the extent to which he is concerned as a childless man. According to his perception, he is more affected than Idu. What he perceives differently from Idu corresponds to the fact that Idu has no mother-in law to blame. Moreover, Adiewere's brother, Ishiodu does not interfere in the relationship. This is highlighted largely in the contrast between women, who are intrusive and play a role in oppressing other women, and men, who are apathetic. Besides, Adiewere's vision manifests his awareness of the problem of emasculation that sterile men face in a patriarchal society. According to Chimalum Nwanko, childlessness is considered as a tragedy in Igbo society. He posits that "in *Idu*, where Adiewere would have provided relief for that blighted image of Igbo manhood, the couple is afflicted with the classic tragedy of the Igbo worldview- childlessness".[25] Ultimately, this claim justifies the persistence of Adiewere's nervousness if Idu is not pregnant. The equation of childlessness to tragedy, in the novel, is further illustrated through the suicide of the sterile male character Amarajeme, as I shall discuss in the third section.

Overall, through Adiewere's experience, Nwapa underscores the crisis of a childless man in pre-colonial Ogwuta community. Anxiety about manhood is shown to be constantly haunting Adiewere's life since his first year of marriage. At the same time, his refusal to take a second wife allows him to live peacefully with his beloved wife. Nevertheless, his resistance to the norms is limited in a community where producing children is prioritised, the 'self' is excluded, and any resistance is deemed impossible. Ironically, Adiewere's crisis remains unresolved even after he succumbs to accept

[25] Chimalum Nwankwo, 'The Igbo Word in Flora Nwapa's Craft', *Research in African Literatures*, 26.2 (1995), p. 48.

polygamy since Idu has not shown signs of pregnancy. The novel responds to this tendency by redefining polygamy and reveals that its effects are not restricted to Idu, but also to Adiewere, as will be discussed in the next section.

2.Irony and The Other Side of Polygamy

As has been discussed in the previous section, Nwapa scrutinizes the negative impact of equating male procreation to manhood on Adiewere. In this section, I will argue that polygamy is not presented as a tempting choice for Adiewere. Rather, it is ironically interrogated and problematised as a troublemaker rather than a solution to childlessness. Moreover, I contend that the fact that Adiewere does not have children with his second wife is perceived as an assertion of male agency, an act of resistance in the form of a man withholding his productive capacities in a context where procreation is an essential mark of manhood.

To begin with, despite Adiewere's emotional crisis due to childlessness, polygamy is not presented as a boost to his male ego. According to Naana Banwiya Horne, in Mariama Bâ's *So Long A Letter* (1981), polygamy is depicted as a "tempting choice for men who are experiencing a mid-life crisis as a way to upgrade their public standing as virile men".[26] Conversely, I contend that polygamy in Nwapa's *Idu* takes on a different meaning from a male perspective. As the novel shows, it is the growing love towards Idu that draws Adiewere to reject polygamy at first and accept it later, rather than his temptation or conformity to the community's norms. The narrator's commentary and blaming of Idu for convincing Adiewere to marry a second wife justifies my claim: "It

[26] Naana Banyiwa Horne, 'Sexual Impotence as Metonymy for Political Failure: Interrogating Ama Ata Aidoo's Anowa', in *Masculinities in African Literary and Cultural Texts*, ed. by Helen Nabasuta Mugambi and Tuzyline Jita Allan (Oxfordshire, UK: Ayebia Clarke, 2010), p. 181.

was Idu's fault after all. It was Idu who insisted on another wife because she did not have a child" (49). This quote discloses that Adiewere does not alter his viewpoint towards polygamy, but towards his perception of Idu's childlessness. Hence, his intention is not to produce a child with his second wife, but to refute the community's women labelling Idu as a "dangerous" woman and because "this unwarranted attack on Idu gave her a jolt" (90). Therefore, Adiewere adjusts his earlier perspective towards his wife's childlessness, but not on polygamy.

The incompatibility between the community's insistence on polygamy and Adiewere's opinion and desire is also apparent in his resistance through an act of omission. This point is made more forcefully, in the novel, through Idu's observation about the lack of an intimate relationship between Adiewere and his second wife, '"when you are supposed to sleep with her you don't'" (50). Therefore, this can be read as a reflection of the distant relationship with his young wife. Through this act of omission, I argue, Idu not only reminds Adiewere about his role as a polygamous husband but reveals his act of resistance. Hence, the second wife is physically positioned within Adiewere's house, but she remains an outsider. Okonjo Ogunyemi advances that the second wife is "a prototype of the embittered, neglected or abandoned wife".[27] I agree with Ogunyemi and further suggest that another kind of fixedness persists in Adiewere's view on a polygamous marriage when he is shown to withdraw from the imposed relationship. Ironically, Adiewere confirms his earlier vision towards polygamy as it culminates further in his emotional instability and crisis in more than one aspect.

Throughout this thesis, I will mainly focus on situational irony as it is directly related to the male characters' expectations and tragic ends.[28] Before I proceed, a

[27] Okonjo Ogunyemi, 'Flora Nwapa: Genesis and Matrix', in *Africa, Wo/Man, Palava: The Nigerian Novel by Women*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 159.
[28] Throughout this thesis, I examine various situations and case studies. Despite the variety of the ironic events, they all signal the vulnerabilities of the male characters as well as their tragic flaws. Unlike irony

definition of situational irony is useful to capture the key features of narrative events and differentiate it from other forms of irony; such as verbal and dramatic irony.[29] A definition of situational irony has been provided by Douglas Muecke, who cited the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Therein, situational irony is stated to be "a condition of events opposite to what was or might naturally be expected, or a contradictory outcome of events".[30] David Wolfsdorf suggests that situational irony "entails a certain incongruity between what a person says, believes, or does and how, unbeknownst to that person, things actually are".[31]

Nwapa in *Idu* uses irony to criticise the community's imposition of polygamy on Adiewere and Idu and reveal how certain norms are in fact detrimental. The irony here consists in the revelation, by means of contradiction, that what appears to be a solution is in fact determined beliefs. The novel shows that polygamy is meant to avert the tragedy of Adiewre's and Idu's childlessness, but instead we come into a situation in which it instigates troubles and complicates the couple's marital relationship. I argue that the use of irony in *Idu* serves to subvert the meaning of polygamy from that of a resolution to that of a trouble. This view is initially shared by Adiewere, who views polygamy as equal to trouble, "in spite of the fact that the members of his age-group teased him, he did not worry. He told them he did not want trouble" (49).

Indeed, Nwapa's use of irony first calls attention to Adiewere's feeling of 'loss' as a polygamous husband while it confirms his initial view. That Adiewere is forced to accept polygamy evokes a reconsideration of his initial confusion at dealing with the second wife. As the narrator suggests: "that was why he was at a loss what to do with his

in the following chapters, the irony I discuss in this chapter is not related to the male characters' intentions and actions, but to the community's expectations from polygamy as a solution to childlessness which turned out to be full of troubles.

[29] Different from irony, verbal irony is that of saying one thing and meaning the opposite. It also implies an ironist, a speaker who deliberately uses a technique as Douglas Muecke terms, 'intentional irony'.

[30] Joan, Lucariello, "Situational irony: A concept of events gone awry", *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 123.2 (1994) p. 129.

[31] David, Wolfsdorf, 'The Irony of Socrates', p. 175-76.

second wife in the initial stages, when Idu did not show any signs of ever being pregnant" (51). Adiewere's case might be viewed as an example of irony as it contradicts the community's considerations of polygamy as a solution to the couple's childlessness. The author's reference to his 'loss' has ironical insights and indicates the continuity of Adiewere's crisis even as a polygamous man.

In fact, the novel questions polygamy when it draws attention to the body as an object denied of all emotions and to a deep sense of alienation, which affects Adiewere's relationship with his second wife. In a moment of outburst, the young wife expresses her dissatisfaction and reminds Idu of her position as a wife in the household, "That's how Adiewere talks to me and that's how you talk to me also. I have not come here as a maid, but as a wife" (48). As the quote reveals, the second wife is treated as a maid rather than as a wife. Her expectations form a sharp contrast to Adiewere's intentions, who is passive and imprisoned within the position as a polygamous man. Although the second wife is also portrayed as a victim of a polygamous marriage, the omniscient narrator does not put the blame on Adiewere "she was neither liked by her husband nor by Idu, and that she was treated almost like a maid. That was true, for how else could she have been treated in that household? It was obvious that Idu and Adiewere were an ideal couple. To them the girl had come to fulfil a function which Idu was unable fulfil" (66). Using the adjective 'ideal', the narrator, in this passage, reflects not only on Adiewere's relationship with his second wife, but also describes the cementing relationship with his first wife, Idu. Moreover, it shows that Adiewere cannot treat her otherwise, which clashes with the second wife's hopes. Therefore, the objectification of the body results in a vast disconnection between Adiewere and his second wife.

Moreover, irony reveals that the second wife is depicted as an 'intruder' who threatens the harmonious marriage of Adiewere with Idu. In her conversation with her

friend, Ojiugo, Idu reveals her perspective on the presence of the second wife, who threatens their harmony rather than resolving their issue of childlessness, "But ever since she came into this house we have had no peace … this is the sixth month since she came to live with us, and not a day passes without her annoying either Adiewere or myself. But you know we are long-suffering" (48). With this in mind, Idu's claim stands as an irony in the novel. We can draw two conclusions from these examples. One is that the irony confirms Adiewere's perspective on polygamy. The other is that it reveals the failed attempt of the community to avert the couple's tragedy. The second wife's presence, then, is ironically designated as a disruption to the harmonious relationship between Adiewere and Idu.

The novel strikingly makes use of irony to respond to the imposition of polygamy by making Adiewere produce a child with Idu rather than with the second wife. The irony here works effectively to showcase the inefficiency of polygamy as demonstrated when Adiewere desires that his second wife leaves. In a conversation with his wife Idu, he expresses "I think she will go of her own accord … we shall see how best we can arrange things, but she must definitely go" (49). Idu's pregnancy has a symbolic significance. It can be interpreted as a solution to break the shackles of polygamy for the purpose of getting back into monogamy, which is to be the pursuit of Adiewere: "To them the girl had come to fulfil a function which Idu was unable to fulfil. Now that Idu was able to fulfil this function they did not care whether she stayed on or not" (66). The implication here is that Nwapa inverts the subjects of the function and thereby alters the meaning of polygamy. Adding to that, the function the second wife has failed to fulfil is also a failed attempt from the community. For, it is the community's suggestion to take a second wife as a remedy for the couple's childlessness. Moreover, it can be symbolically viewed as a

kind of resistance from Adiewere withholding his productive capacities in favour of monogamy and love.

At the same time, in Nwapa's novel, the mysterious absence of the second wife is also shown to be worrying and problematic:

> Adiewere lay down for quite a long time, but sleep did not come. Then his mind went to his second wife. Why did she not come home? Had she decided to go back to her people? That would be very good, he thought. If she returned to her people, he would not fetch her back. But what if she went to another man? She was his wife whatever happened, even if she misbehaved and got herself into trouble. Adiewere was so restless he got up and went outside (51).

In this passage, a mixture of feelings can be detected. The narrator reveals that the second wife's decision to leave on her own has been Adiewere's wish. Apart from showing a kind of relief, it also indicates that Adiewere finds himself anxious as she is still his wife. The sense of anxiety indicates Adiewere's constant crisis as a polygamous man.

Although her disappearance seems to restore Adiewere to his initial position as a monogamous husband, another detrimental implication of polygamy is addressed in another episode in *Idu* when his manhood is called into question. After retrieving herself from the relationship, the second wife publicly questions Adiewere's manhood when she spreads rumours that he "is not a man" (56). Although he, at that point in his life, has already proved he is a man by impregnating Idu, she attempts to undermine his manhood by accusing him of impotency. As it stands, the second wife poses a threat to Adiewere's manhood. The image which the second wife projects of Adiewere is highly damaging to his manhood. Her anger is fuelled by his resistance to polygamy. More importantly,

however, it signifies that such an accusation seems to be developed with her awareness of how being a 'true' man is important to men and Adiewere, in particular. Thus, she associates Adiewere's earlier resistance with the most degrading and insulting contradiction of a man, not being a man. As such, Nwapa employs irony as an effective way to interrogate and undermine traditional Igbo impositions of polygamy by revealing its deleterious effects.

Overall, through the use of irony, the novel explores another facet of polygamy from a solution into a problem. Adiewere's emotions are shown to be repressed during the prioritisation of procreation as a fundamental way of relating to the community and attaining manhood. Moreover, instead of overcoming childlessness, the ironic twist of events in the novel shows that polygamy intensifies Adiewere's feelings of anxiety and loss and threatens to ruin his relationship with Idu.

3. Better Dead than Dishonoured: The Tragedy of the Sterile Man

In section 3 of this chapter, I will demonstrate the effectiveness of tragedy in interrogating both of Amarajeme's tragic flaw and the community's dehumanization of sterile men.[32] I argue that through tragedy, Nwapa questions Amarajeme's construction of masculinity on multiple levels. His tragic flaw lies in his succumbing to the dominant modes of masculine construction, which culminate in his inability to acknowledge his impotency, leads to the destruction of his marriage with Ojiugo, and his commitment of suicide. Moreover, Nwapa criticises and expresses anxiety about the paralysing consequences of the Ugwuta community's imposition of fatherhood, disdain, and

[32] Tragic flaw is defined by John Anthony Cuddon as "a defect in a tragic hero or heroine which leads to his downfall. John Anthony Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary* Theory (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 933.

labelling that lead Amarajeme to his tragic end. Therefore, Nwapa aims to usher new social arrangements into being, namely ones that support an acceptance of the 'sterile man by the 'self' as well as the 'community'.

In *Idu*, Amarajeme is shown to constitute himself through virility. Unlike Adiewere, Amarajeme is portrayed as never having doubted his 'virility': "the thought that there might be something wrong with his virility was pushed aside" (130). While this passage might be considered as a mere technical device introducing readers to the novel's subplot, I contend that it simultaneously stands as a comparison between Adiewere's and Amarajeme's divergent responses to their childlessness. Amarajeme's denial of the possibility that his virility could be in question stands as a metaphor for his longing for 'power' and 'authority', manifesting a masculinity in line with Igbo masculine norms.

In his construction of masculinity, Amarajeme is implicitly shown to exercise power over his wife, Ojiugo, through his refusal to acknowledge his sterility. In a conversation between Idu and Amarajeme's wife, we learn that Amarajeme denies his sterility and instead chooses to put the blame on his wife: "I went to Ogwagara . . . He told me my husband was not a man, and that as long as I stayed with him, I would not have a child. I came back and told my husband this and we quarrelled over it. He went to another dibia he said Ogwagara was wrong" (145). In this quote, Nwapa calls the reader's attention not only to Amarajeme's construction of masculinity, but also to Ojiugo's hesitancy and silence, which together allow Amarajeme to practise assertiveness through his denial of his disempowerment. As a result of Amarajeme's denial, the relationship, I would argue, is represented as abusive towards Ojiugo.

Ultimately, Nwapa criticizes the kind of love Amarajeme expresses towards his wife. On the surface, Amarajeme may seem to be a devoted husband: "my wife was my hands and my feet" (107). However, the metaphor "my hands and my feet" is ironic;

rather than expressing Amarajeme's true love for his wife, the statement indicates his 'dependence' on her as a bearer of his 'secret'. I contend that the couple's interactions with each other can be regarded in the Foucauldian sense of relations of 'power'. For Michel Foucault, any human relationship is a relation of power in the sense that "one person tries to control the conduct of the other".[33] This can be discerned in Nwapa's novel when Amarajeme refutes his impotency, which in turn controls Ojiugo's behaviour. His denial has a detrimental impact on his wife, forcing her to believe in her own infertility: "the first time I received treatment, the second time, they cut open my stomach" (145). Such violent medical act uncovers the insincerity of Amarajeme's love towards his wife.

However, the power relation which characterizes Amarajeme's marriage to Ojiugo is fully subverted when Ojiugo discovers her pregnancy by Amarajeme's friend. She narrates: "Obukodi came round … he came, and for the first time I was unfaithful to my husband, and later I saw I was pregnant" (145). In another reference, the narrator reveals that Ojiugo's action – 'I was unfaithful to my husband' – endows a symbolic significance as a test not only for her womanhood, but also for Amarajeme's manhood because in his first marriage, his wife "did not live long enough to test his strength" (131). By deserting her husband, Ojiugo proves her womanhood and, in turn, leaves Amarajeme. This outcome suggests that Nwapa does not believe in a dialectical theory of power where one sex oppresses the other, but rather in power as shifting, as attained, and lost by multiple negotiations that cross gender lines. After Amarajeme's holding dominance for so long, the relationship between Amarajeme and Ojiugo undergoes a drastic change when Ojiugo's 'power' manifests and overwhelms his.

[33] Foucault, Michel, *Discipline and Punish:* : *The Birth of the Prison***,** trans. by Alan Sheridan (London, UK : Penguin Books, 2020), p. 291.

The process of Amarajeme's emasculation begins with Ojiugo's departure. His wife leaving shifts him from a position of comfort into one of vulnerability and fear, from illusion into reality: "I went in, there was none of her belongings in the room. Fear overcame me, Idu and Adiewere, fear overcame me. I shivered, I staggered and fell . . . where could I go that night? I was helpless" (108-9). The phrase 'fear overcame me' is ambiguous. It seems to be intended as an expression of his feelings, yet the phrase is not followed up by any more details. Rather, the expression is truncated, and fear assumes the subject position of the sentence. It is fear that is carrying out the act of 'overcoming' while Amarajeme, as the object, is disempowered. As a result, he 'shivered', 'staggered', and 'fell'. Despite trying to hide his fear, Amarajeme is betrayed by his body when Idu and Adiewere advise him to focus on his business and forget what has happened: "Amarajeme shook his head. He bit his finger and started shaking his legs again. Now tears rolling down his cheeks" (111). His shaking legs can be read as an indication of his emotional agitation exceeds the control of his mind; it is expressed in his body against his will. In other words, the turmoil in his mind is beyond his control. The weakness of his body stands as a metaphor for his actual 'disempowerment', echoing the beginning of his tragedy.

Amarajeme losing his ability to conceal his fear can be understood as a proof of his awareness of his sterility, which is confirmed through the visit of the old female character Onyemuru. This calls to mind Aristotle's conception of tragic hero, as quoted by John Anthony Cuddon in the following passage:

> There remains, then, the intermediate kind of personage, a man not pre-eminently virtuous and just, whose misfortune, however, is brought upon him not by vice and depravity but by some error of judgment, of the number of those

> in the enjoyment of great reputation and prosperity, e.g., Oedipus, Thyestes, and the men of note of similar families. The perfect plot, accordingly, must have a single, and not (as some tell us) a double issue; the change in the hero's fortunes must be not from misery to happiness, but on the contrary from happiness to misery; and the cause of it must lie not in any depravity, but in some great error on his part; the man himself.[34]

While tragedy was initially related to kings and people of high ranks, it is later taken as any other major art forms. Thus, it can be applied on ordinary people, such as a mother, peasant, or salesman. Indeed, what makes Amarajeme, who is known as a successful trader, a tragic figure is his denial of his sterility and his inability to save himself from destruction.[35] Cuddon foregrounds that "the overwhelming part about tragedy is the element of hopelessness, of inevitability".[36] As it is discerned in the novel in that moment of confirmation and overpowered by Ojiugo's resistance, Amarajeme feels his 'power' shrink. These explanatory details divert readers' attentiveness from the narrative flow to ponder on Amarajeme's emotional reaction at this moment which reveals the vulnerability of his masculine subjectivity. His fear is evidenced through the hyperbole: "My heart missed a beat" (109). Fear leads Amarajeme to ask Onyemuru, instead of answering her question: "Have you heard anything? . . . Have you heard anything please tell me" (109). His response can be interpreted as a quest to answer the question really at the forefront of his mind: whether Onyemuru has heard anything about his impotency. When Onyemuru informs him that Ojiugo has left him for his friend, he becomes devoid

[34] John Anthony Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary* Theory (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 927.
[35] The desire to conform to hegemonic masculinity is the common tragic flaw that characterises the male characters under study. Thus, tragedy is a common technique used by the selected authors in their deconstruction of hegemonic masculine ideals.
[36] Ibid., p. 928.

of all senses: “I did not understand. I was dazed. It seemed as if cold water had been poured on me” (109). His inability to comprehend the information correlates with his loss of senses, indicating his state of shock and crisis. In this brief instant, Amarajeme comes into intimate contact with reality. Even then, though he already knows about Ojiugo’s departure, he chooses illusion, as reflected through his response: ‘“It’s not true’ was all I could say, ‘Ojiugo has not left me. Who said so?”’ (109). Instead of confronting Onyemuru, he escapes the situation by going into Ojiugo’s room and coming out only after Onyemuru has left (109). At this point in the novel, the discovery of Ojiugo’s departure, coupled with Onyemuru’s visit, signals the beginning of Amarajeme’s psychological ‘crisis’, despair, and isolation.

For a time, Amarajeme extends his illusion in a reconstruction of his identity. This is evident in his interpretation of Ojiugo’s departure:

> She will come back. I will be naked. I will starve. But Ojiugo will come back. We understood each other so well. She was all I had in this world. She is not a cruel woman. So, she will come back. That’s why I cook for her every day. She will return. It is only one full moon since she left. But she will come back (109).

Nwapa, thus, shows Amarajeme’s construction of his identity as heavily mediated through his imaginary ‘manhood’. This again hints at his tragic flaw which consists of a denial of his sterility and inability to accept reality.

However, adopting illusion as a means of engaging with hegemonic masculinity is demonstrated to be highly problematic. This is shown when Onyemuru reappears and makes clear the failure of Amarajeme’s effort to redefine his masculinity. Amarajeme’s crisis peaks with Onyemuru’s announcement that Ojiugo has given birth to a son.

Lowering her voice, Onyemuru asks Amarajeme to take the news calmly. In contrast to Amarajeme, Onyemuru embodies hidden meaning, as she not only knows more about Ojiugo's departure, but also has an actual link to Ojiugo as her friend. Although not yet aware of Onyemuru's news, Amarajeme intuits the nature of it: "she was bringing bad news. She always brought bad news" (109). In other words, as Onyemuru enters the spectacle of Amarajeme's crumbling masculinity, she transforms herself from news 'bringer' to an 'observer'. Consequently, via the figure of Onyemuru, the novel criticises Amarajeme's masculinity as illusory and shallow and suggests self-acceptance instead of denial.

Accordingly, the figure of Onyemuru metaphorically represents the community's 'gaze'. As if tired of his current situation, Amarajeme asks Onyemuru to tell him the purpose of her visit. Upon hearing that Ojiugo has given birth to a baby boy, Amarajeme momentarily and imaginarily claims to be the father of Ojiugo's child: "Ojiugo has done what . . . wait, a baby boy. Wait. It's my boy, my first son, mine, mine, mine. No, but wait. She left my house eight months ago. The child must be mine. It is my child" (129). The repetition 'my boy, my son, my child' is deliberate, constructed to emphasise Amarajeme's insisting and continuous claim of 'manhood' and symbolise his persisting longing for 'power'. Even at this point in the novel, Amarajeme clings to his illusory fatherhood.

Despite his endless efforts, Amarajeme's pretension of manhood is severely undermined by Nwapa. Amarajeme's 'imagined' identity, in the end, is shattered by an ineluctable shock. Compared with earlier scenes, in which he perceives himself with confidence, the scene in which Onyemuru tells him about Ojiugo's new baby leaves him confounded and pretends to be uncertain of what he is: "why did she leave me, Onyemuru? Am I not the father of the boy? Am I not?" (129). Amarajeme's self-

questioning recapitulates his gradual displacement from 'illusion'. Therefore, his belief in 'virility', as the only connection between his 'self' and the structures of hegemonic masculinity in the novel, is eventually shown to be an obstruction between Amarajeme and 'reality'. He briefly questions himself, disentangling his thinking mind from the illusion: "But wait, why then did she leave me? Why then?". However, he then "recollected himself" (130). In effect, the narrative documents Amarajeme's limited resistance by highlighting how the brute consciousness is restricted to what is clear and thus to the present moment. Onyemuru makes him aware that his imagined identity cannot be sustainable. Amarajeme has spent his primal strength on journeying towards one direction; he lacks the spirit to reverse his course: "He lived alone. In spirit he was dead, but he lived on" (127). Amarajeme's new state of being reveals the limits of adopting illusion instead of reality by dramatizing his fear and despair. His pretention is severely undermined by the narrator's commentary: "Why should Amarajeme worry himself? If he was not a man he was not a man. The gods had made him so, and so he would be" (126). Nwapa thereby demonstrates the role of fate in Amarajeme's masculinity formulation and his inability to change the situation.

However, this also hints at the reasons that lead Amarajeme to deny his infertility and how hard it is to overcome them. Amarajeme's desperation comes to a climax when his friend Obokudi impregnates Ojuigo and contributes to Amarajeme's s failure. The novel reveals that even Amarajeme's 'power' in terms of financial status carries little weight. Amarajeme declares, "I am stronger. I am richer than Obokudi" (110). However, he later on recognizes his disempowerment against a woman who is ready to "do anything to have one, anything" (56), to prove her72womanhood. Like the female protagonist Amaka in *One Is Enough* (1981), who chooses to escape to Lagos leaving behind her a rigid domestic structure where a woman's role failure as a mother erases her achievements

in all other fields, Amarajeme is also a failure. It is worth noting that while Amaka manages to change her cultural and domestic environment by entering an alternative space outside marriage, Amarajeme finds no alternative option. Rather, the paternal function remains a source of distress to him. These different responses might be seen as a result of Nwapa's shifting from writing 'rural' or 'traditional' novels to novels in which female characters are "ardent individualists and supporters of women's independence from the extended family".[37] This might be also related to the fact that men have a more sense of 'community' and believe in the idea that they cannot exist beyond conventional masculine roles or what Gay Wilentz refers to as the "culture and spirit of the tribe".[38] While Nwapa provides an insight into the resourcefulness of men, she exposes the pain, misery, and above all humiliation which childless men suffer in traditional societies.

Infertility, then, causes the collapse of Amarajeme's marriage. Similar to Newell's claim that "motherhood is a cardinal role in Nigerian marriages … depicting the absence of real choices available to married women without children", I contend that marriage is also shown to be unsuccessful without biological fatherhood.[39] I agree with Okonjo Ogunyemi that "Ojiugo's departure from Amarajeme is like a death sentence" and further suggest that the novel alerts us to the fact that Amarajeme's becoming an object of subordination undermines the conventional delineation of Igbo masculine norms.[40] Therefore, the novel underpins that a relation of 'power', far from being one-sided and fixed, is 'mobile', 'modifiable', and 'reversible'; the person over whom power is exercised can conversely resist dominance. Nwapa demonstrates that the presence of

[37] Newell, 'Feminism and Complex Spaces', p. 156.
[38] Gay Wilentz, *Binding Cultures: Black Women Writers in Africa and the Diaspora* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 5. This shift, however, has not been missed by critics who described female characters, like Amaka, as women devoid of moral values. See, Ibiyemi Mojola, 'The Works of Flora Nwapa', in *Nigerian Female Writers: A Critical Perspective,* ed. by H. Otokunefor and O. Nwodo (Lagos: Malthouse Press, 1989), p. 10-29.
[39] Ibid., p. 155.
[40] Okonjo Ogunyemi, 'Flora Nwapa: Genesis and Matrix', p.160.

resistance in any relation of power makes the constitution of masculinity, in terms of the assertion of authority, challenging and can even place masculinity in question. An important point which Nwapa emphasises in *Idu* is that a man's identity can become dependent on a woman, and should that happen, the man's position is inverted, shifting from a position of dominance to one of subordination.[41] This depiction resonates with Jane Miller's assertion that "men in women's novels are not just men, but men seen from a woman's perspective".[42] While Ojiugo's subject position changes from that of the socially invalid barren woman to the legitimate status of a mother, Amarajeme is shown to be emasculated, leading to the destruction of his marriage with Ojiugo.

In addition to his tragic flaw [denial of his sterility], Amarajeme's tragic end is also depicted in part because of the discourses which define masculinity in terms of 'virility'. Amarajeme is eliminated both by natural selection and by society. Through Amarajeme, Nwapa demonstrates the difficulty of resisting the discourses that permeate the subject. Amarajeme pursues these norms of masculinity until the end, at which point he is unable to exist outside the structures of the Igbo community and their pertinent discourses. His life is woven into that of the community. In this respect, Amarajeme represents Nwapa's growing preoccupation with how such discourses constrain individuals, causing them suffering and humiliation through different means.

Nwapa's use of the conversational technique serves to reveal how the topic of male infertility is dealt with and viewed by the community's members. I contend that it is not just women who are subjected to the disciplinary power of the gaze and disdain;

[41] The wife is usually portrayed as betrayed or abandoned by her husband in case she is unable to conceive. However, in *Idu*, it is a childless husband who is abandoned, an issue that makes us think how male procreation is similarly overwhelming in the life of a man too. Like Ojiugo, Yejide in *Stay With Me* betrays her husband Akin and gets impregnated by his brother. However, she leaves Akin on the grounds of denying his sexual impotency rather than his impotency itself. This portrayal shows that an impotent or childless man is still presented as unfulfilled and weighed down by the shackles of fatherhood, as I discuss in chapter 5.

[42] Jane Miller, 'Introduction', *Women Writing About Men* (London: Virago Press, 1986) p. 3.

men are also affected by the mechanism of surveillance. As it is the case with Amarajeme, while he is in pain, other characters (men and women) are shown to laugh at him (130). For instance, the elderly female character Nwasobi "laughed" because "she too knew about Amarajeme through Uzoechi" and "in no time, the whole town had heard about it. But it was never discussed. It was still secret" (126). As the narrator recounts, the community members play a role in Amarajeme's tragic end. Instead of showing sympathy towards him, the members of the community gossip and laugh. Michel Foucault argues that one form that power takes is that of discipline, which is a mechanism for producing useful and docile subjects. This machinery of power operates through mechanisms such as the gaze and 'normalizing judgement', techniques through which individuals are constantly monitored by other members of society and by themselves.[43] The mechanism of the gaze makes everybody feel that they are under constant control. As the novel shows, Amarajeme is conscious of similar mechanisms of power operating in society, constituting individuals. At this point in his life and for the first time, Amarajeme feels the incongruence between imagination and reality through the disciplinary power which exerts control over him. As Nwapa reveals through her choice of choric language, Ugwuta community has its own system of evaluation. In this system, the norm is the law, and individuals are punished for deviation from the norm.

In addition to disdain, Nwapa sheds light on the negative aspect of labelling, othering, and dehumanisation. This is evident when Amarajeme is evaluated, compared, differentiated, and objectified by the community's men, who represent a background glance at men who achieve fatherhood without complications: '"is he not a man? Is he nothing?'" (148). These questions are interrupted by a sense of shame, as male sterility is viewed as a taboo topic by the community. Male infertility is shown to be unthinkable

[43] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* p. 291.

and even unspeakable. While it is portrayed as an avoidable topic in the Ugwuta community, Nwapa in this novel "dared to put the unthinkable into words: that man, and not always woman, can be infertile".[44] By comparing him to 'nothing', Nwapa highlights Amarajeme's differentiation and 'othering' and mirrors the extent to which Amarajeme is not just emasculated, but also dehumanized. Ultimately, such comparison and labelling offer a justification of Amarajeme's attempt to escape from reality through his choice of illusion. The normalizing judgement, therefore, works through a system of 'branding' or 'naming' and 'dividing' individuals into categories, labelling them accordingly as 'unmen' and 'nothing' and leading to their tragic ends.

Feeling emasculated, this time under the direct gaze of the patriarchal community, in which all members are observing his humiliation, Amarajeme enters a state of mental turbulence. This is evidenced through confining himself inside the house. The detachment of Amarajeme from the world is rendered both physically and socially. The house forms a tangible spatial boundary that cuts him off from the outside. Being enclosed in a woman's 'interior' space stands as a metaphor for Amarajeme's actual feminization. His detachment from the community is further emphasised in his abandoning of his business: "I have not been going. I have no strength to go" (131). The 'strength' Amarajeme refers to is not physical, but psychological, and indeed that part of him is now overpowered by the power of 'shame'. His attempt to distance himself from the community inevitably circles back to the inescapable intertwinement of the self with others. His detachment from the outside environment is thus symptomatic of the alienation inflicted on sterile men.

[44] Okonjo Ogunyemi, 'Flora Nwapa: Genesis and Matrix', p. 162.

Denied the possibility of re-integrating into the community due to the power of the 'gaze', Amarajeme finally commits suicide, an act that epitomizes the impossible resolution of 'illusion' and 'reality', 'sterility' and 'manhood'. Ogunyemi underlines that "When Amarajeme hangs himself, we remember Achebe's Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* and how unbridled masculinity takes its toll on men".[45] Indeed, like Okonkwo, Amarajeme loses control over his life and marriage and cannot admit weakness. He, thus, finds it impossible to cast off centuries of conditioning Igbo masculinity around male procreation. As a result, Ogunyemi contends that Nwapa "should protest so vehemently against patriarchy using female and male suicides and a stillbirth to make her point. The palava is that the heinous system takes a toll on the unborn, relentlessly pursues those who opt out of it through suicide, and gives no quarter to the living – children, women, and men who fail the macho test".[46] Indeed, while Amarajeme's suicide can be viewed as an affirmation of his failure, it also stands as Nwapa's criticism of Ugwuta community's rigid norms.

Adding to this, I posit that Amarajeme's tragic end, he commits suicide fourteen days after Ojiugo has given birth, can also be interpreted as an implicit protest against the community, as he "had polluted the goddess of the land" (147). Amarajeme's rebellion calls to mind Cuddon's suggestion that "tragedy is a kind of protest; it is a cry of terror or compliant or rage or anguish to and against whoever or whatever is responsible for 'this harsh rack', for suffering, for death. Be it God, Nature, Fate, circumstance, chance or just something nameless. It is a cry about the tragic situation in which the tragic hero or heroine find themselves".[47] Against whom or what Amarajeme rebels is not explicitly mentioned in the novel. But perhaps one can assume that his suicide is an expression of

[45] Okonjo Ogunyemi, 'Flora Nwapa: Genesis and Matrix', p. 163.
[46] Ibid., p. 161.
[47] Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary*, p. 928.

his rage against his ancestors who could not help and save him from his downfall, or against the goddess of the lake, or can be against Ojiugo and his friend Obokudi, or all of them. Besides, it can also be understood as clear evidence of protesting against his own 'self' through his final rejection of his 'real' self: the sterile Amarajeme. As it is reported in the novel, "Amarajeme hated himself. He was not pleasing to himself" (146). By contextualizing Amarajeme's response in this way, I contend that Nwapa in *Idu* stresses the importance of realistic assumptions and acceptance of the sterile man by both the self and the community.

Overall, I argue that by depicting Amarajeme's experience of sterility through tragedy and using the elements of illusion and suicide, the novel explores the destructive dimension of the shift from hegemonic masculinity to emasculation. As has been discussed, 'self-acceptance' is shown to be repressed under the prioritisation of manhood, which itself is a constructed imaginary mode relating to the masculine 'self' and to the perception of 'others'. The prevailing norms of masculinity of his time prove to be constraining, unsatisfactory, and impossible to resist. To stand outside these discourses, as Amarajeme discovers, is to become indefinable. Therefore, both the community's impositions and Amarajeme's response to them culminate in his tragedy.

Conclusion

Although fate and biological factors are significant determinants in Adiewere's and Amarajeme's lives, Nwapa emphasizes the role that social forces play in the shaping of their subjectivities. Social forces pervade Adiewere and Amarajeme, governing their thoughts and actions. I contend that through intertwining the techniques of irony and tragedy Nwapa's inability to envisage ways of formulating masculinity other than those offered by the prevailing norms of the Igbo society of the first half of the twentieth century

suggests the impossibility of defining oneself outside the domain of Igbo structures and discourses. The same impossibility is detected in Emecheta's novel, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 2. Masculinity in-Between: The Colonised Male Subject in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979).

Introduction

The central narrative in *The Joys of Motherhood* takes place in Nigeria during the colonial period and expands on several pre-colonial masculine issues (e.g the individual versus the community, producing children) explored in the previous chapter. However, Emecheta, in this novel, is more concerned with the portrayal of indigenous Nigerian masculinities in an urban setting, in times of transition from pre-colonial to colonial Nigeria, thus depicting a new era of Nigerian masculinity from a feminist perspective.[1] Therefore, the analysis, in this chapter, will focus on masculine issues related to dislocation, colonial discourse, double-consciousness, double-oppression, emasculation, and ambivalence, foregrounding the weight of both colonial history and Nigerian patriarchal norms in the construction of a fractured Nigerian masculinity, as manifested in the novel.

Buchi Emecheta is a prolific Nigerian writer who was born in 1944 in Lagos to parents from Eastern Nigeria. She received her education in Lagos then moved to London to study sociology. Therefore, her writings are inspired by her sociological study as she focussed on sociological issues such as black oppression in White society, man-woman relationships, tradition versus modernity, and colonialism. Moreover, she was influenced by the oral tradition told by women of her village and her mother. Thus, Emecheta aspired to become a storyteller herself. As a writer, Emecheta believed that female writers handle

[1] Lagos, the capital of Nigeria, became a British colony in 1861, but it wasn't until 1906 that the entire country was formally brought under the control of the British government. The setting of *The Joys of Motherhood* takes place in the 1930s and 1940s, a time when many parts of Nigeria were still adjusting to the changes imposed by foreign rulers. See, *Nigeria: A Country Study, ed. by* Helen Chapin Metz (Washington. DC: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1992).

female characters more sympathetically than male writers, and according to Adeola James, she was the first African author who addressed the issue of feminism overtly.[2] However, like Flora Nwapa, Emecheta rejects the label feminist and preferred to be called a feminist with small 'f', as will be manifested throughout this chapter.[3]

Since its publication in 1979, Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* has been critically analysed as a feminist text that addresses concerns about gender inequity and women's oppression.[4] The emphasis is put on the novel's concern with African women's issues by focusing on the novel's female characters from the perspective of feminism. While several scholars have focused on the patriarchal order, colonialism, the representation and the oppression of African women, not much has been done to examine the portrayal of the male experience in the novel.[5] Masculinity in this novel is only

[2] 'Buchi Emecheta', in *In Their Own Voices: African women writers talk,* ed. by Adeola James p. 34. In an interview with Adeola James, Emecheta states that African male writers feel threatened as she speaks overtly while they feel more comfortable with Flora Nwapa who "won't come out and say what she feels … because she lives in Nigeria, and she is a good woman. She is creating her own life, her own career, in a polygamous environment, and she keeps cool". Ibid,. p. 38. Indeed, Emecheta had more freedom to express her ideas overtly because she lived in England.

[3] Emecheta's rejection of the label 'feminist' is perhaps to differentiate herself from Western feminists while confirming her interest in African women's issues and their position in society. It may also infer Emecheta's interest in both men and women's issues as it is the case in *The Joys of Motherhood.*

[4] For example, in 'The Treatment of Patriarchy in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* and Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come'*, Olusola Oso examines patriarchy and women's situations. She highlights women's marginalization in both traditional and urbanized Lagos. Olusola Oso, 'The Treatment of Patriarchy in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* and Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come', Studies in Literature and Language* 15.3 (2017), 1-8 <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/sll/article/view/9859> [accessed 14 January 2018]. Mohamed Fathi Helaly in *Cultural Collision and Women's Victimization* (2016) examines the effects of cultural collision on the female protagonist, Nnu Ego, arguing that she is a victim of both institutions. See, Helaly, 'Cultural Collision', p. 117-127. Likewise, in 'A Study of Buchi Emecheta's The Joys of Motherhood in the Light of Chandra Talpade Mohanty: A Postcolonial Feminist Theory', Zohra Barfi. *et al* (2015), explore traces of colonialism, capitalism, racism, and solidarity in Emecheta's novel using Mohanty Postcolonial feminist theory. Zohra Barfi, and others, 'A Study of Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* in the Light of Chandra Talpade Mohanty: A Postcolonial Feminist Theory', *European Online Journal of Natural and Social Sciences,* 4.1 (2015), 26-38 <https://european-science.com/eojnss/article/view/2166> [accessed 15 January 2021]

[5] In 'The Joys of Motherhood and the Throes of Fatherhood' in *African Wo/Man Palava* (1996), Okonjo Ogunyeme draws little attention to the male protagonist's situation in Lagos under the effects of colonialism. She refers mainly to the hardships he endures and his emasculation during his encounter with whites. Okonjo Chikwenye Ogunyeme, 'The Joys of Motherhood and the Throes of Fatherhood', in *Africa, Wo/Man, Palava: The Nigerian Novel by Women*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 254-261.

addressed in two journal articles by Nii Okain Teiko and Etter-Lewis Gwendolyn.[6] However, most critics' interpretation of Nnaife is disconcertingly negative, considering him as deficient, irresponsible, and responsible for the gender oppression faced by the female characters, Nnu Ego and Adaku. These portrayals, however, obfuscate his turmoil and the overwhelming expectations placed on him as a colonized and traditional man in urban Lagos.

Accordingly, I divide this chapter into two main sections. In section one, I explore how Emecheta, ironically, depicts the degradation of the agrarian pre-colonial form of masculinity in the colonized city of Lagos. Instead of reaching economic stability, Nnaife is shown to be deceived as he finds himself subject to poverty, racism, and emasculation and is contrastingly compared to the men in Ibuza through the technique of character foils. In the second section, I expose the effectiveness of using tragedy to shed light on the tensions that result from being traditional in a colonial setting. I contend that Nnaife's acceptance of the tradition of widow inheritance and use of violence to solve conflicts, in Lagos, are proved to be futile. Rather, it implies that Nnaife's resistance to adapt and change, which Emecheta presents as most damaging, leads to his failure in his role as a polygamous husband and to his tragic end in detention. Moreover, I contend that Emecheta, without displaying nostalgia for traditional norms and dominant masculinities, sheds light on the crisis that both colonialism and pre-colonial patriarchy inaugurated amongst the Ibo men in Lagos.[7] She uncovers the anxieties, feelings of humiliation, and

[6] In *Changing Conceptions of Masculinity in the Marital Landscape of Africa* (2017), Nii Okain Teiko examines the re-configuration of masculinity in the novel. He argues that Emecheta depicts a hybridism of masculinities, in the context of marriage, maintaining a balance between their traditional African roles and an imitated Eurocentric display of love and affection in enacting their roles in the marital enterprise. Teiko, 'Changing Conceptions', p. 329-57. See also, See Etter-Lewis Gwendolyn, 'Dark Bodies/White Masks: African Masculinities and Visual Culture in Grace Land, The Joys of Motherhood and Things Fall Apart', in *Masculinities in African Literary and Cultural Texts*, ed, by Helen Nabasuta Mugambi and Tuzyline Jita Allan (Banbury: Ayebia Clarke, 2010), pp. 160-77.

[7] I have used "Ibo" rather than "Igbo" spelling throughout this chapter to be consistent with the version used in Emecheta's novel. See Victor C. Uchendu, *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965) for an engaging look at Ibo culture and society.

dilemma that torture Nnaife's consciousness, who finds himself torn between two worlds, that of traditional village of Ibuza and the city of Lagos. Thus, Nnaife is unable to find a comfortable space for his defeated self.

Buchi Emecheta in *The Joys of Motherhood* narrates the story of a traditional and uneducated Ibo woman, Nnu Ego, who migrates to Lagos from her father's village to live with the husband who has been chosen for her after her unsuccessful marriage in Ibuza. In Lagos, both Nnu Ego and her husband, Nnaife, face several hardships due to poverty and colonialism when Nnaife works as a washer man for his colonial masters. During this period, Nnaife inherits his deceased brother's wives and children; among them is the young wife, Adaku. As the story develops, the novel depicts women's masculinization when both Nnu Ego and Adaku must work hard to sustain the family's needs during their husband's engagement in the war as a soldier. After a long period of time and suffering, Nnaife returns home to find life more expensive in urban Lagos. As for his two sons, they decide to immigrate and study abroad, leaving the burden of providing for the family on Nnaife and Nnu Ego's shoulders. The novel ends with Nnaife's detention after trying to defend the honour of his daughter who elopes with her lover, while Nnu Ego returns to Ibuza and dies alone.

A "Man" in Ibuza is A "Boy" in Lagos: Nnaife's Emasculation

"They stopped being men long ago. Now they are machines" (53).

> "African men consciously grappled with different forms of masculinity, engaging with, adopting, and discarding various expectations and images of proper male behaviour".[8]

Through the use of irony, the novel exhibits an ironic reversal on the scale of its overall structure as Nnaife realises that he has achieved something quite different from what he set out to achieve. This mainly due to the deteriorating impact of colonialism that provokes poverty, self-disdain, and a tension with pre-colonial Nigerian Igbo norms. The irony is exhibited in Emecheta's characterisation and plot to expose Nnaife's initial aspirations in Lagos and the type of masculinity he adopts later. Instead of bringing financial stability, Nnaife's migration to Lagos leads to his subordination in a colonial setting where emasculation happens at several levels.[9] Therefore, Emecheta allows readers to understand Nnaife in a better way and how life in Lagos under colonialism negatively impacts his manhood and leads to his downfall.

To start with, Emecheta employs irony to put emphasis on Nnaife's subordinate masculinity and degradation in Lagos. Nnaife is portrayed as an ambitious man, who strives to run away from agrarian life and its dependency on the weather. He expects that work in the colonized city of Lagos -the capital of an emerging nation of Nigeria- brings more financial security. As an illiterate man, he finds himself living in an old room in the "boys' quarters". His room is situated behind the White master's and mistress's house where he is employed as a washerman. Nnaife and his family reside in the same compound where he works because "workers' nuclear families were to reside not in remote villages but near the industrial workplace, where they would both sustain and be

[8] Lindsay, 'Introduction', *Men and Masculinities,* p. 7.
[9] The labels used to refer to subordinate masculinity, during the colonial period, differ from one context to another. For instance, *Ormeek* is a Maa word for "modern" (and effeminate) Maasi men. Lindsay, *Men and Masculinities,* p. 20. In the Nigerian context as well as in Emecheta's novel, as will be seen throughout this section, "Boy" is the label which refers to a historically subordinate masculinity.

provided for by their employed patriarchs".[10] The place where Nnaife lives and works can be seen as accommodating his undermined position and emasculation, in the same way as in the patriarchal background where wives live in outhouses in the back yard.[11] Indeed, the novel describes the "square room", where Nnaife lives and which symbolises Lagos, as a "place of sacrifice". It is "painted completely white like a place of sacrifice… where men's flesh hung loose on their bones, where men had bellies like pregnant women, where men covered their bodies all day long" (46). The preceding lines could be regarded as an example of irony as the novel reveals that Nnaife's bodily transformation is something unexpected, reflecting his actual status as a colonised man. Men's bodies in Lagos are transformed not only by the lack of exposure to the sun, but also by less physical work. As such, Nnaife falls short of the ideal masculine in Ibuza.

Moreover, irony reveals that while Nnaife's proximity to the colonial world accords him a job, it also plunges him into poverty. Working as a washerman is not only with little gain but becomes the only means to survive and feed his family after his marriage, as he tells his wife, "Washing the white woman's underclothes was what was able to keep us alive" (85). This case might also be looked upon as a typically ironical one in the frame of a situation of poverty. Emecheta, here, evokes a sense of dependency on the colonial masters through the phrase "was able to keep us alive". The fluctuating levels of poverty that define Nnaife's situation throughout the novel patently illustrate this new dependency. When Nnaife works, his wife Nnu Ego and her children are schooled and fed, but when Nnaife stays at home, Nnu Ego and the children face starvation. Such a situation would not have been the case in the agrarian economy of Ibuza. As Nnaife's wife, Nnu Ego, herself admits as she prepares to return to her village

[10] Lindsay, *Men and Masculinities*, p. 139.
[11] The concept of emasculation is defined is used in this chapter particularly to refer to Nnaife's loss of authority and agency under colonialism. The novel repeatedly makes reference to 'robbed manhood', 'slaves', 'baboon', and 'boys'.

for the last time, “at least there would be no rent to pay and, if it came to the worst, [I] could always plant ... food at the back of [my] hut” (219). The city setting of Lagos does not offer these alternatives, and hence Nnaife’s life there is characterized by a dependency on the coloniser. Cordelia, the cook’s wife, who live in the same compound, comments on their miserable conditions in Lagos, “they [their husbands] are all slaves, including us…the only difference is that they are given some pay for their work, instead of having been bought. But the pay is just enough for us to rent an old room like this” (51). Her claim vaguely reflects the problems of the urban landscape, among which indigenous dwellers are restricted to a single room housing. Her reference to their husbands as slaves reflects the extent of their enslavement and misery in a colonial setting due to dislocation. This term refers to the displacement that occurs because of imperial occupation. It may also refer to the transportation from one country to another by “slavery or imprisonment, by invasion and settlement, a consequence of willing or unwilling movement from a known to an unknown location”.[12] Heidegger’s term ‘Unheimlich’ or ‘unheimlichkeit’ is often used to describe the experience of dislocation. It literally connotes ‘unhousedness’ or ‘not-at-home-ness’.[13] In a similar way, Nnaife’s physical, social, and individual dislocation from Ibuza to Lagos generates a dislocating process that degrades him into a subordinate position. Nnaife’s degradation can be understood as the result of staggering unemployment rates which force Ibo men into being servile for white masters. As such, the novel uses irony to demonstrate the detrimental effects of Nnaife’s dislocation: he escapes from agrarian life to have to contend with harsh economic conditions under colonial control.

[12] Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Studies*, p. 73.
[13] Ibid.

In addition to poverty, irony demonstrates that colonial capitalism and the move from an agrarian economy to a money economy has tremendous impact on Nnaife's masculine identity. The city of Lagos is depicted, in the novel, as a "soft place" (46) where men's manhood is lost rather than a place of financial security that Nnaife assumes to be. Yet, despite Nnaife's job's stability, it is also shown to be demeaning and effeminizing. This is because jobs are maintained and controlled by members of the colonizing class, as by 1914, Britain had succeeded in making herself the new paramount ruler over most of Nigeria. This is reflected in the novel through the type of job Nnaife exercises as a 'washerman' for white masters. From a traditional patriarchal perception of a man, Emecheta depicts Nnaife as feminized because he is forced to perform feminine roles. Carolyn Brown argues that labour has detrimentally affected African workers' construction of masculinity. She refers to race as a 'crucial' factor in the colonial encounter. She adds that gender was constantly "created and re-created" both through work experience and in their roles because of their work. She points out that colonial officers and employers feminized and infantilized African workers. She argues that "in the racialized discourse of colonialism, African subordination was represented as a weakness, effeminacy, or "childlike immaturity".[14] Similarly, Emecheta, in the novel, represents Nnaife with womanly and childlike qualities, which is symptomatic of the status of the African man in colonial cities.

Furthermore, the extent of Nnaife's feminization is metaphorically reflected in his physical appearance. Through character foils, the female protagonist Nnu Ego refers to the conventional expectations of her kinsmen when she is shown to be less than pleased with her husband Nnaife's appearance:

[14] See, Carolyn A. Brown, 'A Man in the Village Is A Boy in The Workplace: Colonial Racism, Worker Militance, And Igbo Notions Of Masculinity In The Nigerian Coal Industry, 1930-1945', *Men And Masculinities In Modern Africa*. Ed Lisa A. Lindsay And Stephan F. Miescher. (Social Histories of Africa, Heinemann 2003), p. 159.

> A man with a belly like a pregnant cow, wobbling first to this side and then to that. The belly, coupled with the fact that he was short, made him look like a barrel. His hair, unlike that of men at home in Ibuza, was not closely shaved; he left a lot of it on his head, like that of a woman mourning for her husband. His skin was pale, the skin of someone who had for a long time worked in the shade and not in the open air …And his clothes __Nnu Ego had never seen men dressed like that: khaki shorts with holes and an old, loose, white singlet…like living with a middle-aged woman! (42).

The description of Nnaife's roundness and pale skin is suggestive that he does not display the hard work of the "tall, wiry farmers, with rough, blackened hands from farming, long, lean legs and very dark skin" (43) who live in Ibuza and work in farms. This also suggests that other male characters who live in Ibuza share a collective identity, except Nnaife. In addition, that Emecheta uses similes and repetitively makes reference to feminine qualities: 'pregnancy' and 'long hair' highlights that Nnaife embodies the colonial sense of being uprooted from one's home, tribe, identity, and masculinity. The only thing that relates him to his tribe is the same "tribal mark" as his brother; "they had similar foreheads, and the same kind of gestures, but there the similarities ended, for otherwise the two men were as different as water and oil" (43). His pale skin can also be interpreted in terms of binary oppositions to foreground his position in a world of liminality and cultural transmutations; he is neither too black nor white. He is also a man but embodies feminine traits and performs feminine cores. Furthermore, in her description of Nnaife, Emecheta uses smell to stress Nnaife's differentiation from his Ibo Kinsmen. Her presentation and descriptions of Nnaife are more specific and effective: "He did not smell

healthy either, unlike men in Ibuza who had the healthy smell of burning wood and tobacco. This one smelt all soapy, as if he was over-washed" (44). Adding to Emenyonu who argues that Emecheta makes the reader "obliged to share Nnu Ego's disgust and contempt for the man who was to be her husband" (138), I contend that Emecheta uses Nnaife's body to shed light on the loss of his tribal collective identity.[15] By this, Emecheta highlights Nnaife's differentiation as both his body and identity are no longer identical to that of Ibuza men.

Thus, Nnaife's redefinition represents a significant departure from the more traditional models of Ibuza male identities. Emecheta dramatizes the degradation of colonised masculinity by drawing it against the pre-colonial Ibo masculine qualities of the 'Big Man'.[16] In *The Joys of Motherhood*, masculinities are constructed in an oppositional framework through character foils. The pre-colonial image of the 'Big Man', in this text, is presented through character traits and is mainly exemplified by the father of Nnaife's wife, a local chief, Nwokocha Agbadi.[17] He is depicted as a well-respected

[15] Ernest N. Emenyonu, 'Technique and Language in Buchi Emecheta's The Bride Price, The Slave Girl and The Joys of Motherhood', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature,* 23.1, (1988), p. 139 <Technique and Language in Buchi Emecheta's The Bride Price, The Slave Girl and The Joys of Motherhood (oclc.org)> [accessed 16 January 2018].

[16]According to Ifi Amadiume, in *Male Daughters, Female Husbands (*1996), "the pre-colonial period, pre-1900, is considered by present-day Ibo as the 'olden days', when traditional customs were 'pure and unspoilt'. In contrast, after 1900, including both colonial and post-colonial times, is considered as the modern period". But she asserts that "this division does not imply that in the 'olden days' there was no external contact or change. Change would have been gradual and negotiated, and neither sudden nor immediately apparent". Ifi Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1987), p. 21.

[17] The term "Big man" has garnered attention from a number of scholars and was first used in scholarship in 1963. It is defined by Albert Trouwborst as "a self-made man, exerting personal power… [and whose] authority and power [are] based on his wealth and position in the exchange system". Albert A. Trouwborst, 'The "Big-Man": A Melanesian Model in Africa', in *Private Politics: A Multi- Disciplinary Approach to Big Man Systems*, 1 vol, ed. by Martin A. Van Bakei, Renée Hagesteijn, R., and Pieter van de Velde (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986), pp. 50. On the notion of the "Big man", Mats Utas argues that "a Big Man is primarily, but not only, a political figure associated with opulence. Bigness is in part measured in status symbols and the ability to fill that Big Man role according to social criteria". Mats Utas, African Conflicts and Informal Power: Big Men and Networks (London: Zed Books, 2012). p. 7. Likewise, in his discussion of the sub-Saharan African Big Man, Jean-Pascal Daloz notes that "supporters expect their respective leader to display external signs of wealth… They revel in the idea that he possesses more prestigious and impressive goods for these are in some way a credit to the whole community…" (281). Jean-Pascal Daloz, "'Big Men" in Sub-Saharan Africa: How Elites Accumulate Positions and Resources', Comparative Sociology, 2.1 (2005), p. 281 <https://doi.org/10.1163/156913303100418681>. See also, Susanna Iacona Salafia, 'The

"son of the soil", very wealthy, taller than the average man, and handsome (11). People of his community accepted him as a leader as "he was born in an age when *physical prowess* determined one's role in life" (10). Nwokocha Agbadi has several qualities in common with Okonkwo in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958).[18] Both are taller than the average man and both are skilled wrestlers. However, unlike Okonkwo, Agbadi is a man of words, an accomplished orator known for his provocative speeches. In addition to his physical traits and oratory skills, he also has the status of the head man, living in a compound consisting of seven wives, two mistresses, numerous children and relatives. Besides, providing for and protecting one's family is shown to be one of the duties expected from men in pre-colonial Nigeria. As Ifi Amadieume asserts, "what was stressed for men was their duty to provide for and protect their families".[19] Alongside Agbadi, Nnaife's brother, and Nnu Ego's first husband are all portrayed as models of hegemonic masculinity opposite of the male protagonist, Nnaife. This suggests that dislocation, the imposition of alien social and economic structures across colonized regions, and the consequent destruction of traditional sources of male power, had a disruptive effect on pre-colonial masculinities. To reflect this in the novel, the city of Lagos is constantly compared and contrasted to the traditional village, Ibuza, to demonstrate not only the difference between these two places, but also to present oppositional masculine identities. The inclusion of these character foils corresponds effectively to how the reconfiguration of his masculinity correlates with the reshaping and unfamiliarity of his body due to the impact of the colonial environment and workplace.

'Bigmanism' or the 'Big Man Syndrome' As an Optical Lens to Understand African 'Democracies' – a 'Case Study' in Zimbabwe'. INTCESS14, –International Conference on Education and Social Sciences, February 3 – 5, 2014, (Istanbul: Fatih University, 2014), pp. 601-610 <239.pdf (ocerints.org)> [accessed 10 July 2020].

[18] Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (London: Heinemann, 1958).

[19] Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands,* p. 93.

Another instance of irony is when Nnaife becomes subject of ridicule by his masters' ill-treatment and perceptions. Nnaife is bestialized, in a scene, when the white master treats him with disdain and refers to him as a "baboon". We are told that when Nnaife greets his masters and wishes them a good night after he has finished his job, "Dr Meers peered over the paper, smiled mischievously and answered, 'good night, baboon' … he heard Dr Meers laugh and repeat the word 'baboon'" (41-2). The use of the word "baboon" is significant as it encapsulates an instance of colonial discourse; a system by which the coloniser imposes knowledge upon inferior groups such as Nnaife:

> Colonial discourse is implicated in the ideas of the centrality of Europe … although it is generated within the society and cultures of the colonizers, it becomes that discourse within which the colonised may also come to see themselves, At the very least, it creates a deep conflict in the consciousness of the colonized because of its clash with other knowledges about the world. Rules of inclusion and exclusion operate on the assumption of the superiority of the colonizer's culture, history, language, art, political structures, social conventions, and the assertion of the need for the colonized to be 'raised up' through colonial contact … through such distinctions it comes to represent the colonized, whatever the nature of their social structures and cultural histories, as 'primitive' and the colonizers as 'civilized'. [20] .

This can be discerned in the novel when the white masters have offered a sort of background against which the blacks like Nnaife define themselves, leading them to

[20] Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Studies*, p. 43.

develop double consciousness.[21] In the context of slavery, Edward Said has pointed out that slavery evolved as an economic institution based on primitive accumulation. To facilitate the process of exploiting black people, the slave owners made statements about what it meant to be black, and this was done to dominate and restructure power relations between the slave and the slave owner.[22] To reflect on the process of Nnaife's enslavement under colonialism, Emecheta repeatedly makes reference to labels and terms that are used by his colonial masters to subjugate him.

Ironically, Nnaife unconsciously internalises his own subordination as a colonised man. Dumbfounded in his illiterate existence, one could argue that Nnaife's inferiority complex is shown when he accepts to be called a baboon: "We work for them and they pay us. His calling me a baboon does not make me one" (42). Even though Nnaife ignores the meaning of "baboon" and is curious to know its meaning (42), he is shown to be aware of its negative connotations. Here, Nnaife represents subordination, and this is heightened when reflecting his confusion. Nnaife's loss of his tribal identity is not only apparent in his physical appearance, but also in the way he perceives the world around him, particularly himself. Emphasising this, the writer evokes a sense of internalizing the 'implanted sense of degradation and inferiority' that Frantz Fanon, located in colonized populations.[23]

Accordingly, Emecheta uses 'white masculinity' as a tool to construct the 'African self', making dichotomies literal such as strong/weak or master/slave. Such issues, I suggest, force us to consider how the possession of land, in Ibuza, is integral to the Ibo

[21] Double consciousness is a term first coined by W.E.B Du Bois in an essay titled "Of our spiritual strivings". Du Bois elaborated the concept of "double consciousness" to refer to the ambiguity of being black and American. The ambivalence and unstable identities suggested by the term imply living a life characterised by seemingly irreconcilable dualities.
[22] Edward, Said, *Orientalism,* (New York Vintage Books, 1979), p. 3
[23] See Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* trans. by Richard Philcox (New York: Grove, 2008).

indigenous concept of manhood: a source of power, independence and pride. To this, Emecheta shows sympathy with Nnaife and condemns the white masters' superiority:

> If the master was intelligent, as it was said all white men were, then why did he not show a little of it, and tell his wife to keep quiet? What kind of an intelligent man could not keep his wife quiet, instead of laughing stupidly over a newspaper? Nnaife did not realise that Dr Meer's laughter was inspired by that type of wickedness that reduces any man, white or black, intelligent or not, to a new low; lower than the basest of animals, for animals at least respected each other's feelings, each other's dignity (42).

This passage reveals that the author's condemnation of imperialism is now combined with a subtle criticism of racism by comparing racist men to animals. It also reveals the equality of people in terms of race, intelligence, and position. From these statements, we might understand that Nnaife internalizes his own powerlessness and the lower position that he occupies in Lagos.

The same reaction appears in another situation when Nnaife wrongly assumes he is the one referred to as "old boy" by the White golf players (93). Nnaife's emasculation becomes more prominent when one interrogates the historical significance of the term 'boy' further. During colonialism, different labels have been used to undermine colonised men. Nnaife's reflection echoes Okonjo Ogunyemi's claim that "colonialism thrives on the premise that the colonized are childlike and undeveloped".[24] This argument is further reinforced by Tsitsi Dangarembga's, who claims that:

[24] Ogunyemi, 'The Joys of Motherhood and the Throes of Fatherhood', p. 257.

> …My sense is that in [the colonial situation], one [is] always working with this split consciousness as it were…. [The colonized is shocked] to have to suddenly start developing this other consciousness that deals with [them] as "the powerless", "the disposed" and labels [them] as such, [requiring them] to internalize this to some extent in order to be able to cope in that system. Because, if [they] don't accept that label at some level, that system will destroy [them]…. I wouldn't call it "personality" – but more a double consciousness.[25]

The same point of 'double consciousness' is addressed by Emecheta, in the novel, when Nnaife is shown to believe in his own imperfection. This is evident through the interior monologue when he states: "but I am only a black man, and I don't expect to know everything" (83). The narrator adds that "he was one of the Africans who were so used to being told they were stupid in those days that they started to believe in their own imperfections" (83). Thus, this alludes greatly to the way Emecheta ironically reveals that maintaining one's job in Lagos demands total submission, though it is against Ibuza norms. In this regard, irony in *The Joys of Motherhood* uncovers that Nnaife is mistaken in thinking that life is better in Lagos under colonialism.

Moreover, irony serves to unearth how Nnaife is portrayed as a man, who is quite submissive and dependent on his masters. Converting into Christianity and marrying in church are presented as necessary requirements to maintain one's job in Lagos. Afraid of losing his job, Nnaife attempts to convince his wife to remarry in church according to Christian norms, "if I do not marry you in church, they will remove our names from the church register and Madam here will not like it. I may even lose my job…Ubani the cook

[25] Rosemary Marangoly George and Helen Scott, 'An Interview with Tsitsi Dangarembga', *Duke University Press* 26.3 (1993), 309–19 (314) <https://doi.org/10.2307/1345839>.

had to marry his wife in the Catholic church to save his job" (50). Nii Okain Teiko contends that Nnaife's aim to marry in church is a result of his influence by his masters. He goes on to say that "in consonance with Nnaife's loving nature and taking a leaf out of the copybook of his employers—Dr Meers and his wife—he convinces Nnu Ego to 're-marry' him in accordance with the Eurocentric tradition of a church ordinance ceremony".[26] I do not agree with Teiko, as he simplifies this situation when he remarks that Nnaife is a loving man and adopting white Christian values. Teiko, here, seems to ignore the fact that Nnaife finds himself obliged to submit to his masters, though it seems for Nnu Ego, he is only behaving like a "slave" (50). In fact, dependency on white masters and the idea of marrying according to Christian norms is something unexpected when Nnaife moved to live and work in Lagos. Therefore, I contend that it is another instance of irony which enables us to witness the absurdities placed on Nnaife by colonialism and the ways he and other male characters respond to them. The irony in this example allows us to parse Emecheta's ideas and theme about lack of agency and dependency that are expressed in ways that are not be able to be conveyed through other literary techniques. Agency, in contemporary theory, hinges on whether individuals are able to initiate action freely and autonomously or whether the things they do are determined.[27] In the same way, Nnaife is unable to take decisions or have control over his life, highlighting his subordinated masculinity and inferior position in Lagos. This is shown when he struggles to find a job after the masters leave for England (86). Ogunyemi rightly argues: "like a woman, Nnaife waits for his master's return as Nnu Ego would wait for his return from World War II" (257). Indeed, Nnaife's waiting for another colonial master calls attention to his excessive dependence on his white masters in the same way Nnu Ego does.

[26] Teiko, 'Changing Conceptions', p. 352.
[27] Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Studies*, p. 8.

Consequently, Nnaife loses also the authority in his household. He is shown to lack respect from his wife. Being a washerman is depicted as a bone of contention between him and his wife. For Nnu Ego, Nnaife is "some man" as he "washes women's underwear" (49). The l irony here is an effective way that allows the reader to see the discrepancies Emecheta is pointing out about being a patriarchal authoritative husband in Ibuza and an effeminised one in Lagos. The omniscient narrator in the text reflects Nnu Ego's thoughts in the following quotation, "was this a man she was living with? How could a situation rob a man of his manhood without knowing it?" (50). Nnu Ego's idea of Nnaife seems to improve soon after the delivery of her first son. As she explains to the Owerri woman, "But you see, only now with this son am I going to start loving this man. He has made me into a real woman—all I want to be, a woman and a mother. So why should I hate him now?" (55). Teiko argues that Emecheta "subverts the physical disposition to the biological function, the essence of marriage—a man's ability to impregnate his wife" (351). While I agree with Teiko's view on the importance attached to male procreation, I would argue that the colonial situation forces us to consider more complex constructions of identity. Rather, I contend that Nnaife's potency has little effect as Nnu Ego constantly compares him to her first husband in Ibuza, even after having children with Nnaife: "Nnu Ego found herself comparing him with Amatokwu. That *native Ibuza* man. *That African* … Amatokwu measured up to the s*tandard of her culture* had led her to expect of a man. How would he react if he were forced by circumstances to wash for a woman, skinny shrivelled-up one with unhealthy skin? he would *surely refuse*. That was *the sort of man* to *respect*" (72). From these lines, we deduce the destructive effects of colonialism on Nnaife's status as a husband, which divests him of any patriarchal privilege within the home. This argument is reinforced by Cornwall, Lindsay, and Brown, who claim that "the 1940s and 1950s witnessed an increased

emphasis on Nigerian men as financial providers in their families. But when women earned money as well, or when men's economic opportunities diminished, men became less able to control their wives than previously" (Lindsay and Miescher introduction 20). Nnaife, then, epitomizes the emasculating condition of the colonized man in urban cities that affects him not only in the public sphere, but also in the private.

In addition to his demeaning job, Emecheta underpins the relationship between alienation and the setting to underscore Nnaife's detachment from the world both physically and socially. The impetus behind his isolation is both colonialism's new capitalist economy and the pressures that such an economy places on lower-income families. The loss of any meaningful connection with the public sphere is explicitly inscribed in one of the most pervasive visual images of the text: the encroaching walls and cramped spaces of his one-room flat. Besides, he is employed in his masters' compound, which forms a spatial boundary that encloses him in an 'interior' space from morning to evening and cuts him off from the outside, as he has only half a day off (47). Such confinement provokes his isolation from his wife as he has "little time to take notice of Nnu Ego" (47). The alienating effect is not limited to Nnaife and his wife, but characteristic of other couples in urban Lagos; each is isolated in a different 'world' as the narrator comments:

> Like husbands and wives in Lagos, Nnu Ego and Nnaife started growing slightly apart, not that they were that close at the start. Now each was in a different world. There was no time for petting or talking to each other about love. That type of family awareness which the illiterate farmer was able to show his wives, his household, his compound, had been lost in Lagos, for the job of the white men, for the joy of buying expensive lapas, and for the feel of shiny trinkets. Few men

> in Lagos would have time to sit and admire their wives' tattoos, let alone tell them tales of animals nestling in the forests, like the village husband who might lose your favourite wife into the farm to make love to her with only the sky as their shelter, or bath in the same stream with her, scrubbing one another's backs (52).

From this passage, we might understand that the illiterate farmer has the advantage of looking after his family, which Nnaife lacks in Lagos. Despite the fact that Nnaife works in the same compound, distance is not a measurement for alienation. It is the type of job that is confining and isolating.

Furthermore, Nnaife is not only distanced from his wife, but also alienated from his family in Ibuza. His detachment from his village and family members reflects Nnaife's feeling of nostalgia: "there was a ring of nostalgia in Nnaife's voice when he asked of the welfare of the people at home" (77). From these statements, we might understand that Nanife's distance from his village and family is symptomatic of the alienating condition of the colonial urban city of Lagos, reinforcing Cordelia's claim that men become machines and no longer men. The only difference is while machines are placed in factories and manipulated by human beings, Nnaife is placed in a compound and manipulated by his colonial masters. Therefore, Lagos is not just presented as a place of sacrifice, but also as a setting of physical and social detachment from the exterior world.

Yet Emecheta widens the gulf of isolation when Nnaife joins the ship crew members in Fernando Po. This shows that working near or far from the house, separation from family is inevitable in urban life during colonialism. Moreover, like the other ship crew members, Nnaife is subjugated by the type of job he is practicing. In Fernando Po, the narrator tells us that their masters: "not able to buy these workers outright, made them

work like *slaves* anyway… they were paid —paid *slaves*— but the amount was so ridiculously small that many a white Christian with a little conscience would wonder whether it was worth anybody's while to leave a wife and family and stay almost a year on a voyage" (112). Comparing the workers to paid slaves is patently ironic. Emecheta reveals that although slavery has been prohibited, it takes another form during colonialism. The novel depicts African workers as slaves. This also shows that Nnaife's dependency on the white man is still persistent despite his aspiration to lead an independent life. Besides, it can be understood from the narrator's comments here that his new job is shown to be not dissimilar from the previous one with his white masters. The only difference is that he is now away from home, particularly, away from the compound of his masters.

There is another event wherein Nnaife's expectations are ironically violated. Nnaife's unexpected enslavement is addressed in another episode in *The Joys of Motherhood* when he is forced to join the army. Emecheta, through an ostensibly metaphorical association, eventually conjoins the condition of slaves during the period of slave trade and the condition of colonized Nigerians during British imperialism. We are told that "men screamed like women as some of them were caught" (144) and Nnaife is among them. In this passage on slavery, the comparison of these men in 'crisis' to 'women' indicates their 'disempowerment' and 'feminization' in front of colonial powers. Hence, the irony here exhibits a strong opposition between Nnaife's going to work to feel like a man versus his emasculation. Feminisation, as an outcome, tends to recur in the novel as a nemesis, to reflect the extent and the persistence of emasculation. Besides, Nnaife's experience reminds him of the past when slaves were caught and taken to an unknown destination. Thus, feeling himself a slave leads him to wonder whether slavery still exists (145) and indicates his actual enslavement. Slavery, in this context,

implies that history tends to repeat itself; it posits Nnaife in a positionthat suspends linearity and brings together the present and the past into a temporal coexistence.

In addition to feminization, terms such as 'boy' are literally writ large in the text: "squeals of pain warned the others to stay put and be good "boys" (145). The diminutive terms such as 'good boys' are not merely metaphors for enslavement and emasculation; they are lateralized in the actual act of submission and compliance.[28] The plural noun 'boys' also establishes the collectiveness of the colonized urban workers' subjectivity. Colonialism thrives on the promise that the colonized are childlike and underdeveloped (Ogunyemi 256-7).[29] Taking them to the unknown reflects their disorientation and the sense of impending doom caused by their – and Nigeria's – entrapment in colonial instability and amid a war between uncontrollable powers. Such ironic events show frailty in that they depict the unwitting disempowerment of men during both slavery and colonialism.

Furthermore, in *The Joys of Motherhood*, both the coloniser and the colonised are metaphorically presented and compared. Emecheta compares the coloniser to *God* and Africans to a property when Ubani [Nnaife's friend] tells Nnu Ego about Nnaife's engagement in the army. He says, "There is nothing we can do. The British own us, just like God does, and just like God they are free to take any of us when they wish" (148). The use of the simile "like God" is so evocative of the supreme power of the coloniser and the subordinate position of the colonised. Joining the army according to Ubani is inevitable and indicates Nnaife's disempowerment.

Overall, Emecheta's use of irony brilliantly underpins how the various events in the novel take a striking turn. Through irony, *The Joys of Motherhood* exposes an

[28] Lindsay and Miescher assert that the term 'boy' refers to an important social category in many African context, including "biological maleness, social (but not necessarily physical) immaturity, and, in colonial situations, racialized inferiority in relation to men". Lindsay, *Men and Masculinities*, p. 5.
[29] Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyeme, 'The Joys of Motherhood and the Throes of Fatherhood', p. 256-7.

opposition between Nnaife's intentions to lead a better life in colonial Lagos and the unexpected emasculating world, where African masculinity is dissolved and in which he finds himself trapped in. In the colonised urban city, there is no place for illiterate African men like Nnaife and his wife; their existence in Lagos is irrelevant, dehumanizing, and feminizing, as "she [Nnu Ego] and her husband were ill prepared for a life like this, where only pen and not mouth could really talk" (179). Therefore, through Nnaife's actual experiences in the situational cases, Emecheta ironically criticises those men who believe Lagos to be a place of opportunities. To restore his robbed manhood, Nnaife succumbs to traditional norms which further plunge him in a cycle of poverty and troubles, as will be discussed in the next section.

2.Traditions and Nnaife's Tragedy

In the previous section, I sought to examine Emecheta's use of irony to contest British colonial exploitation of Nigerians during colonialism and reveal how urban Lagos is a site of emasculation rather than economic stability. In this section, I argue that tragedy is also employed, in the novel, to reflect Nnaife's double oppression, interrogating the impositions of the tradition of widow inheritance as well as Nnaife's internalization of Ibo traditional norms in Lagos.[30] I contend that Nnaife's acceptance of polygamy proves to be overwhelming rather than helping to restore his manhood. Moreover, his attempt to protect his daughter's honour through the use of violence is shown to be tragic, as will be discussed throughout this section.

[30] By 'double oppression', I refer to Nnaife's victimisation as a colonised and traditional man, husband, and father.

The Joys of Motherhood demonstrates that polygamy [widow inheritance], is not only linked to pre-colonial traditional masculinity, but it is especially imposed on the male characters of the colonized urban settings. Ibuza is a village where people live as a community in a rural environment. Such an environment has its own traditions, customs, values, and norms at the economic as well as social levels. According to traditions in Ibuza, when a man dies, his brother inherits all his wives and children and has to be responsible by caring and providing for them. Despite the foreign influences of colonialism, Emecheta reveals that the traditional act of inheriting a deceased brother's wives and children is still expected to be performed in urban colonized Lagos. Upon hearing the news about the death of his brother, Nnaife is shown to be aware of his responsibility as a man in the family: "He felt it his responsibility to inherit his brother's wives" (131). Accordingly, such awareness drives him to conform to the tradition and perform his masculinity according to the pre-colonial Ibuza values.

Despite being subject to colonialism and its influences, Emecheta underlines Nnaife's internalization of Ibuza values and his willingness to shore up traditional expectations. Monogamy is one of the teachings of Christianity. It is based on the belief of one man: one woman. That Nnaife diverts from Christianity to pre-colonial norms of Ibuza suggests that Christianity is only adopted to grant him a job as a washerman for white masters:

> These people called Christians taught that a man must marry only one wife. Now there was Nnaife with not just two but planning to have may be three or four in the not so distant future. Yet she [Nnu Ego] knew the reply he would give her to justify his departure from monogamy. He would say: "I don't work for Dr Meers anymore. I work as a grass-cutter for the Nigerian railway Department, and they

> employ Moslems and even pagans". He had only been a good Christian so long as his livelihood with Dr Meers depended on it (119).

This passage reveals the conflict between Christian principles and pre-colonial traditional beliefs of Ibuza. Moreover, it indicates that Nnaife is not completely detached from Ibuza. Rather, he is ready to disregard Christianity as long as his work is not dependent on his previous masters. Working as a grass-cutter gives him more freedom to adhere to the tradition of widow-inheritance.

While I acknowledge that polygamy is shown to be imposed, I argue that Emecheta critiques Nnaife by exposing his egotistical motivations for taking several wives. For, he is shown to be delighted on the arrival of his second wife to Lagos. Moreover, accepting polygamy can be interpreted as a motivation to prove his manhood to his community. His act is moulded by hegemonic masculinity. Nnaife wants to prove to his Ibuza community that he still conforms to the Ibo norms despite his migration, though, his reality is one of anxiety and economic insecurity.

However, polygamy is severely undermined and shown to be problematic. *The Joys of Motherhood* is demonstrative of how polygamy is inconvenient in a colonial setting as it results further in the collapse of Nnaife, the breadwinner. Rather than establishing an extended family union, polygamy has made Nnaife weak. His family is too large to be cared for. What is challenging, in such situations, is the fact that Nnaife is asked to assume traditional duties and responsibilities under a newly imported economic system. And yet while that reality is certainly one message the novel imparts, there is far more to the text than a critique of colonialism. The novel presents a subtle critique of the imposition of traditional customs without taking into consideration one's economic status, particularly in colonial urban settings. The fact that Emecheta's novel moves

beyond the critique of colonialism to explore the irrelevance of traditions in urban Nigeria is summarized in a crucial passage midway through the novel in which Nnu Ego pauses to wonder how to cope with their current situation. Her reasoning and arguments express her inner feelings and worry. She asks, "oh Nnaife, how are you going to cope? All those children, and all those wives" (115). This excerpt is key in locating the source of Nnaife's double oppression not in his position as a polygamous man per se, but in his position as a man who is asked to assume the same obligations of his "agrarian background" within a new cultural setting. This becomes more significant when thinking about Nnu Ego's question, in the novel, which remains unanswered as the right answer is very clear: the new system in Lagos makes of her husband a man incapable of providing sufficiently to sustain his family. However, as an Ibo custom, Nnaife is bound to accept it without any reflection or hesitation, despite Nnu Ego sending a letter to Ibuza explaining their hard times in Lagos. In the message Nnu Ego sends to Ibuza, she informs Nnaife's people that "things were difficult in Lagos, that Lagos was a place where you could get nothing free, that Nnaife's job was not very secure, that she had to subsidize her living with her meagre profits" (118). Despite her explanations about their difficult situations, Nnaife is compelled to assume his patriarchal traditional role and protect his family financially as the custom does not differentiate between rich and poor people. Rather, it becomes a must, which provokes various challenges for Nnaife and his family. Pressured to conform to the norms of his village but stripped of the means and incentives to fulfil that role successfully, Nnaife finds himself in a conflict between a colonial system whose modern values and modern economic configurations are fundamentally irreconcilable with the traditional social structures of indigenous Nigeria. By this, Emecheta aims to expose the economic and social futility of trying to bring certain customs forward into urbanity and modernity.

Moreover, instead of demonstrating an achieved restoration of his robbed manhood, Emecheta questions Nnaife's choice to stay in Lagos. In Nnaife's point of view, his stay in Lagos would save him from the endless demands of his large family. However, the novel ironically shows that the environment of the colonial society makes it more difficult for Nnaife to maintain his position as the head of the family. The clash between tradition and colonial situation in Lagos is illustrated through Nnaife's inability to properly perform his masculine identity as a polygamous husband, which is literally writ large in the text. Lack of regular jobs confines him to levels of poverty which makes it nearly impossible for him to feed, clothe, and educate his children. This would not have been the situation in his tribal village of Ibuza, where wives' crop yield would have sustained his large family, and where the other women of the community would have controlled key sectors of the local economy through the production and exchange of household goods and services. Moreover, when Adaku joins Nnaife in Lagos, she has to share with Nnu Ego and her children the same room, which brings in an interesting contrast of masculinity performance in Ibuza. According to Nii Okain Teiko, "Nnaife's selfish decision to marry his late elder brother's wife, Adaku, and his inconsiderate resolve to live in the same room with both wives without considering the social responsibility of providing, for Nnu Ego, a separate room according to customary ways appropriate to a senior wife, indicate an image of masculinity in reverse gear heading towards collapse".[31] While it is true that Nnaife does not fully conform to the custom, Teiko seems to ignore the difficult situation in Lagos, where the newly imported capitalist ideology of the nuclear family enforces cohabitation of spouses. Monogamy is one of the ideals of Christianity which is antagonistic with polygamy in Ibuza. Adding to this, conditions of life, living in one room, do not accommodate the presence of several wives

[31] Teiko, 'Changing Conceptions', p. 353.

and children. There is no financial support for Nnaife given that in Lagos the husband is the sole breadwinner. Unlike Lagos, women in Ibusa are able to work in farms and support their husbands. Polygamy is also shown to facilitate women's work as they can leave their children with other women (e.g co-wives) while working in the field. Teiko adds that Nnaife struggles to maintain balance between a monogamous and a polygamous marriage because of his being influenced by his colonial masters. He argues:

> Nnaife has tasted city life, has been influenced by his employers' marriage, and is later recruited by the colonial administration to fight in the Second World War. These experiences modify Nnaife's notion of masculinity. He struggles to maintain a balance between his role as the 'man' in a monogamous marriage with Nnu Ego and his polygamous marriage with Adaku and all the other wives of his late elder brother.[32]

I agree that Nnaife is influenced by his masters' marriage to some extent. However, the difficulties that lead to his inability to perform neither a monogamous nor a polygamous marriage are mainly economic. In this sense, the novel demonstrates that polygamy is well-suited to the agrarian lifestyle of the Ibo people and contained several built-in mechanisms that allowed both men and women to better cope with that type of lifestyle. In Lagos, Nnaife's most profound challenge is to successfully negotiate the virtually endless forces that populate his world—forces which deeply frustrate his attempts to perform a socially acceptable masculinity. In this way, the novel dramatizes his struggle to navigate a balance between traditional demands and colonial impositions.

[32] Ibid., p. 350.

Since Nnaife's earning depends on his masters, their departure gives rise to his increasing dilemmas and psychological turmoil; a feeling that has found expression in a howl of anguish and despair. It makes Nnaife's sense of responsibility unattainable, especially during trying economic times of war. These facts are crucial to understand the hardships experienced by men like Nnaife. As the novel makes evident:

> Many people were caught in the middle: people like Nnaife and his family, families who had left their farming communities to make a life from the cities. It was comparatively easy when there was no war; one could always be a domestic servant. Now with the war, the masters were at the front fighting. Money was short and so were jobs. And in Nnaife's family there were many more mouths being added to those to be fed (126).

This passage reveals that Nigeria's transition from a tribal culture and a tribal moral value system to a Western capitalist system with all its pitfalls has occurred at the expense of men like Nnaife. The dominant capitalist system proves to be devastating for Nnaife, who is pressured to maintain his role as a traditional polygamous man, regardless of the fact that this new system works against the success of that role. Therefore, it is difficult for Nnaife to maintain that sense of responsibility as the other men of his community. That Nnaife finds himself in a predicament suggests his failure towards his role as the head of the family, culminating in his ineluctable despair.

In addition, lack of domestic jobs correlates with Nnaife's further emasculation while the female characters are masculinized. From a traditional patriarchal perception of a man, Emecheta depicts Nnaife as feminized because he is forced to perform feminine roles while his wives work and assume masculine roles. Robert Connell emphasizes that

the concept of hegemonic masculinity is changing, and gender hierarchies are subject to change as well. In a changing process, there is a possibility of older forms of masculinity to be displaced by new ones because it is a dynamic "configurations of gender practice" negotiated in time, ideology and culture.[33] So central is the switching of roles to this text that this condition is allegorized and physically instantiated in chapter seven "The Duty of a Father", nine "A Mother's Investment", twelve "Men at War", fourteen "Women Alone", and fifteen "The Soldier Father" which features Nnaife's feminization and Nnu Ego's and Adaku's masculinization. The very narratological construction of these chapters and their place in the narrative draws attention to itself. For not only does the narrator narrate, but also provides commentary on different occasions. We are confronted with this situation in the scene where Nnu Ego goes to work in the market while Nnaife stays at home and takes care of their son. In that scene, Nnaife's self-confinement to the domestic sphere is symbolic of a deeper powerlessness. Throughout the novel, the imperial authorities' ability to feminize the males can be viewed as a tool to facilitate a more extensive psychological mastery of the colonized population, in which insecurity and enervation are widespread. In this prospect, Nnu Ego reverses masculine and feminine roles as she assumes a masculine role while Nnaife is feminized.

I would argue that Nnaife's staying home is not a result of laziness, but an outcome of the harsh economic pressures faced in Lagos. This is demonstrated in a scene when Nnaife wishes to regain his manhood as he does not want to be like "a stone around her [Nnu Ego] neck … Nnaife did not like this arrangement and grumbled about it, but there was nothing he could do. Not only did life in Lagos rob him of his manhood and of doing difficult work, now it had made him redundant and having to rely on his wife" (87-95). So, he decides to go to a town very far from the compound where he lives, called

[33] Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 28.

Fernando Po. From this action, we can deduce that he eventually longs for regaining his masculinity, which has been repressed. The narrator reflects that "Now he felt like other men" (92). It is only in this instance that Nnaife feels the pride of performing his masculinity as anticipated by the Nigerian patriarchal society. From such lines however, it should be wrong to condemn Nnaife for not being able to meet the needs of his family. This scene, however, has led several critics to condemn Nnaife for his irresponsibility while sympathizing with Nnu Ego. For instance, Teiko argues that Emecheta "problematizes the kind of masculinity that abandons the paternal role of providing for the home".[34] It is obviously because of this feminization and masculinization that critics such as Teiko regards Nnaife as an irresponsible husband and father. He goes on to interpret this shift in roles as a sacrifice from both Nnu Ego and Adaku while it is a matter of irresponsibility from Nnaife whom he compares to Okonkwo's father in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. He argues, "both Adaku and Enu Ego have to work hard to provide for the needs of the family while Nnaife lounges about in indolence, drinking palm wine and playing his guitar all day and evening, similar to Unoka, Okonkwo's father, in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*".[35] While I agree with Teiko's argument about the subversion of gender roles and women's contribution in providing for their families, I argue that the grounds for Nnaife and Unoka's feminizations are different. Achebe depicts Unoka as an irresponsible and lazy man. In contrast, Emecheta, in this novel, highlights the circumstances that coerce Nnaife to reformulate his masculinity. In such a situation, Nnaife and Nnu Ego's performances of reversed gendered roles deconstruct the conventional feminine traits of a traditional woman and the patriarchal masculine traits of a traditional man. This reversal, I contend, is the result of the intersection of traditional

[34] Teiko, 'Changing Conceptions', p. 347.
[35] Ibid., p. 353-54.

Nigerian expectations with the disruptions and tribulations which colonialism has caused many Nigerian men. The overall effect of this cultural confrontation between Ibo traditions and morals and Western traditions and morals is registered most profoundly in the decline of Nnaife's agency within the domestic sphere. The lack of formal employment opportunities alters his position in the home by forcing him to become materially dependent on his wives.

Emecheta further questions Nnaife's internalization of Ibo values through her portrayal of the old and new generations and the tension between Yorubas and Ibos. In a tribal society such as the Ibo society, a woman is free but is not allowed to marry someone of her choice. Therefore, she cannot make her own decision regarding marriage and maternal life.[36] This is evidenced by Nnaife when he plans the marriage of his daughters, promoting traditional values of marriage as acquired from the Ibuza community. The narrator informs us that "Most Ibos, at the time, did not like their children marrying Yorubas. One tribe always claims to be superior to the other. Even an Ibuza girl who chose another Ibo person outside Ibuza as a friend was regarded as lost. To go so far as to befriend a Yoruba man was abominable" (202-3). S. C. Nnormele claims that in Ibuza:

> Fathers dominate their daughters ensuring a system of perpetual subjugation of women. Here, women are valued only for the money they bring to their fathers through their price. Girls have no choice in whom they marry and that sexual relationships are unromantic because fathers sell their daughters to the higher bidder.[37]

[36] Helaly, 'Cultural Collision and Women Victimization', p. 119.
[37] Salome C. Nnoromele, 'Representing the African Woman: Subjectivity and Self in *The Joys of Motherhood*', *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, 43.2 (2002), p. 179 <https://doi.org/10.1080/00111610209602179>

This description validates the fact that (male) parents occupy hegemonic patriarchal position that enables them to make decisions for their daughters. Ultimately, the novel demonstrates that Nnaife still believes in this cultural norm from the Ibuza community, though he lives in Lagos.

However, the novel foregrounds that the issue of parents occupying hegemonic patriarchal positions and their imposition of traditional norms on the modern generation is no more valid in Lagos. This tradition is challenged by the young generation whose understanding of marriage is determined by modern social standards. Nnaife's second daughter Kehinde and the butcher's son are representatives of a young generation that undermines traditional gender norms. This is evidenced when Kehinde refuses a man her father chooses for her when she states, "I am not marrying that man…he grew up in Ibuza. I don't like him" (204). Nnaife's traditional thinking reminds Kehinde about marriage in the past and notes that things have changed with modernity. He says, "you don't have to like your husband…you don't even have to know him in advance. You just marry him. You are lucky you already know this one, and that you know what job he is in. Things have changed. Before, you might not have known him at all" (204). Through the depiction of these characters, we learn that modernity influences youth to undermine and subvert the traditional conventions of gender. As a result, Kehinde precipitates a family crisis, which ends the novel, by deciding, against her father's wishes, to marry a Yoruba. She declares, "Father, I want to marry and live with Ladipo, the butcher's son. I don't want an Ibuza man!" (204). Her courageous response demonstrates a challenge to the rigid patriarchal norms where women's voice is silenced. Hence, the entire discussion and Kehinde's confession validate the impact of modernity on the modern generation and society at large.

As such, Nnaife's traditional thinking and inability to cope with modernity and Lagos raises another fundamental issue that culminates in his downfall. To survive in Lagos, Nnaife must acquire flexibility to adapt to changing realities. These are the real tests for Nnaife, and he fails all of them as he clings to traditional institutions and beliefs of Ibuza. This is evidenced through Nnaife's response when he knows about his daughter's affair with the butcher's son. The narrator describes Nnaife's rage:

> The room seemed to him to have grown darker all of a sudden. He went behind the curtain in their room and had a glass of chilled palm wine which he had been saving for after his evening meal. He could not wait. He wanted to blot out his burning worries. But the drink did nothing to alleviate the pain…He could not bring himself to cry, but he felt the lump in his throat all the same (205).

From this depiction it is apparent that Nnaife finds it difficult to accept change though he himself has previously subverted Ibuza norms, as discussed in the previous section. As such, this scene stands as a call to critically scrutinize the destruction that is caused by patriarchy that affects both men and women as well as old and young generations.

Furthermore, this confrontation also involves psychological intimidation as we see how Nnaife becomes confused and frustrated after hearing about Kehinde's elopement. The omniscient narrator describes Nnaife's shock and anger in the following passage:

> He was *talking, talking* as though he was *asleep,* though his eyes were wide open and *staring*. He hastily and haphazardly tied his wrapper, exposing the part he was supposed to be covering; his behaviour was not without purpose, but one

> would have thought that his senses had left him… With that, he bent down under his bed —anger made him so agile so quick —reaching for the big cutlass … He picked up the cutlass, swung it in the air…He was so wild, he was so determined (208-9).

This scene reflects an ideological struggle between the Yoruba family and Nnaife. It is important to note that between the two sides Nnaife wants to impose his power over the other. His power is symbolized by the cutlass he is carrying and is also manifested in the Yorubas' fear and hiding from him (209). It is this urge to impose one's power over other men that exposes Nnaife's masculine traits as his performance indicates control, superiority and authority, the very indices of men's masculinity dramatization. Moreover, the novel shows it as the only way he has learnt to solve tensions in Ibuza. He tells the butcher that despite his living in Lagos, his origins are from Ibuza: "in his mind he thought he was in the Ibuza of his childhood where arguments of this sort were wont to be settled by sheer force" (210). The confusion between where he is and his origins hints at the impact of internalizing traditional norms. These factors are key attributes to men's definition and construction of hegemonic masculinities in Ibuza and Nnaife falls a victim of this struggle.

Therefore, the novel underpins that Nnaife's use of violence leads to his tragedy. His willingness to take revenge on those who breach patriarchal rules has led to his loss of control when his cutlass "landed once, on the young man's shoulders" (209). The novel responds to this violent act and reveals its inefficiency in Lagos when an ambulance arrives followed by policemen who clasp a handcuff round Nnaife's wrist and bundle him into the van (210). This scene underlines Emecheta's depiction of Nnaife as a colonized subject, who "dwells in a liminal space between colonial discourse and the assumption of

a new 'non-colonial' identity", as well as between the change that takes place in Lagos and his inadaptability to it.[38] In doing this, Nnaife's tragic end is metaphorically described through the night cloth which comes off, "about to reveal his nakedness" (210). The term "nakedness" in this context symbolizes Nnaife's loss and downfall in a rapidly changing setting, especially when colonial foreign systems are introduced and clash with traditional values.

Coping under colonialism and traditional customs, Nnaife is caught in a dilemma and tormented by a feeling of shame because of his embarrassing failure to meet his community's expectations of hegemonic masculinity. The narrator informs us that "Nnaife could not go back to Ibuza and admit failure. He was used to living in Lagos, even though it was difficult" (89). There is a mass of debilitating emotions, riddled with a sense of shame at confessing. As such, Nnaife seems not only unable to return and face the people of his community, but unfit neither in Lagos nor in Ibuza. Consequently, Nnaife's inability to efficiently play his role as a provider and protector engenders a sense of embarrassment and failure to protect the honour of his daughter is the final humiliation.

Conclusion

In *The Joys of Motherhood,* Emecheta underscores what it means to be a colonised man, a husband, and a father in the Nigerian society during the 1940s. Emecheta offers ironic insights into the degradation of pre-colonial masculinity in colonial Lagos. While the male protagonist, Nnaife, stands out in comparison with other male characters in the text, he nonetheless functions as a focal point for Emecheta's narrative to underscore the plight of men who are forced to negotiate both colonial structures and Ibo indigenous

[38] Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Studies*, p. 130.

customs. Nnaife represents a subordinated masculinity, who constantly embraces roles that are traditionally seen as feminine. In a colonial society so fundamentally structured upon the marginalization of the colonized, Emecheta has explicitly demonstrated that gender roles can be reversed, and that masculinity is a position that can be occupied by both males and females. Despite the changes that take place in the city of Lagos, Nnaife's patriarchal thinking takes precedence in *The Joys of Motherhood*. Through tragedy, Emecheta has used Nnaife as a representative of the African man in general and the Nigerian man in particular through whom she wants to convey a message that adherence to Ibo traditions under a colonizing system is damaging. Lagos is envisioned as a city where things are changing rapidly. To cope and coexist with such changes, Nnaife has to adapt himself to this new world with its culture and values. Nevertheless, he fails all of them as he clings to the original cultural values of Ibuza. Yet, this adherence does not help him in this new world of Lagos but culminates in his fear of societal disgrace and shame and places him in an 'in-between' space. Dwelling in a post-independence liminal space between colonial discourse and non-colonial identity will be discussed further in the next chapter

Chapter 3. Between 'Mimicry' and 'Négritude': the Ambivalence of Post-independence Masculinity in Mariama Bâ's *Scarlet Song* (1986)

Introduction

This chapter highlights the effects of the intersection between négritude and French colonial assimilation on post-independence Senegalese masculinity in Mariama Bâ's *Scarlet Song* (1986).[1] While the previous chapter focussed on Emecheta's use of irony and tragedy in her portrayal of the fragmentation, double consciousness, and double-oppression experienced by the colonised Nigerian Igbo man, this chapter examines Bâ's representation of the fluctuation of Senegalese masculinity after independence.[2] In this chapter, I suggest that the novel is riddled with ambivalences.[3] The instability of masculinity depicted in Emecheta's novel is likewise shown to be experienced by post-independence Senegalese Wolof men in Bâ's novel.[4] Unlike the illiterate Nnaife in the previous chapter, in this chapter, I will explore Ousmane's position as a member of the elite. The examination of Ousmane's constant struggle to restore his agency through first mimicry and then through a return to the indigenous Wolof norms offers alternative perceptions of Senegalese masculinity in a historical era marked by an

[1] Négritude is defined as a "theory of distinctiveness of African personality and culture". Bill Ashcroft, and others, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concep*ts (London and New York 2000), p. 161. It was developed in Paris by African Francophone writers such as Leopold Sédar Senghor and Birago Diop, and West African colleagues such as Aimé Césaire. Like other race-based movements of W.E.B Dubois and Marcus Garvey, negritude is essentialist and nativist. However, it is distinct in its aim to show that "the negro is possessing a distinctive 'personality' in all spheres of life, intellectual, emotional and physical". Ibid., 162. According to Ibiola Irele, Pan-Africanism which is described as "essentially a movement of emotions" can also be applied to négritude. Abiola Irele, 'Negritude—literature and ideology, *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 3.4 (1965), p. 499. https://www.jstor.org/stable/159175 [accessed 22 Jun 2021]. For more information on Pan-Africanism, see Colin Legum, *Pan-Africanism a Short Political Guide* (London, 1965).

[2] Like Buchi Emecheta, Mariama Bâ writes from a site of European colonisation and its aftermath. However, Bâ writes about French colonialism of Senegal and its assimilation policy.

[3] Ambivalence is a term that was first developed in psychoanalysis to describe "a continual fluctuation between wanting one thing and wanting its opposite". It was later adapted into colonial discourse theory by Homi Bhabha to describe the complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterizes the relationship between coloniser and colonised. Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Studies,* p. 12.

[4] Bâ's *Scarlet Song* takes place in Dakar, the capital of Senegal, a former French colony whose inhabitants are predominantly Muslims. Unlike the other novels discussed in this thesis, Bâ's *Scarlet Song* was originally written in French as *Un Chant Écarlate* (1981) because she wrote from the former French colony of Senegal, and this thesis will use the translated version into English by Dorothy S Blair.

escalating crisis and associated anxiety.[5] It concerns itself with the investigation of Ousmane's changing perspective on universalism and négritude in relation to the legacy of French colonialism, mimicry, race, gender, postcolonial resistance, and identity crisis.[6]

A renowned female novelist, Mariama Bâ was born in 1929 in Dakar, Senegal, and raised by her maternal grandparents in a strictly traditional Muslim environment in a very extended family. One of the aspects of her grandparents' traditional thinking was their strong opinions that as a girl, she should not receive a formal education and should only study Islam. However, her father's diplomatic position assisted her to receive the best education in Senegal. Consequently, she was enrolled in a French-language school in Dakar. Throughout her career, Bâ was active in women's organizations and politics. In particular, she advocated the improvement of the position of women and openly spoke against polygamy and genital mutilation. In 1979, Mariama Bâ published what is said to be the first truly feminist African novel, *Une si longue lettre [So Long a Letter* (1980)], which won the Noma Award in 1980.[7] According to the feminist critic Omofolabo Ajayi-Soyinka, "with her first novel, *So Long a Letter,* Mariama Bâ achieved a reputation as a writer who adds a strong, unique, and culturally relevant feminist voice" to African literature.[8] Moreover, Mariama Bâ's fictional world is informed by the culture of the

[5] Mimicry is an important term in post-colonial theory, for it describes the ambivalent relationship between the coloniser and the colonised.

[6] Universalism is the antithesis of négritude. It refers to the assumption that human life and experience exist beyond the constitutive effects of indigenous cultural traditions. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin argue that "universalism offers a hegemonic view of existence by which the experiences, values and expectations of a dominant culture are held to be true for all humanity" (*Post-Colonial Studies,* p. 235). Indeed, I adhere to the argument advanced by these postcolonial scholars that the assumption of a common humanity underlies imperial discourse as it fails to acknowledge cultural differences. In this chapter, I will relate it to Ousmane's initial belief that culture is universal, suggesting the idea that he and the white French man are the same.

[7] In addition to aspects of feminism in *So Long A Letter*, Ba portrays different types of masculinity, including hegemonic, oppressed, and alternative masculinities. However, I selected *Scarlet Song* as it revolves around a male protagonist from childhood till his tragedy in adulthood in a post-independence context which fits well with the overall argument of the thesis.

[8] Omofolabo, Ajayi-Soyinka, 'Negritude, Feminism, and Quest for Identity: Re-Reading Mariama Bâ's So Long a Letter', in *Emerging Perspectives on Mariama Bâ: Postcolonialism, Feminism, and postmodernism*, ed. Ada Uzoamaka Azodo, (Trenton, N.J: Africa World Press, 2003) 153-174 (p. 153).

Wolof, the major Senegalese ethnic group to which the novelist belongs. In *So Long a Letter*, Bâ bridged that distance between the African forms of spoken storytelling and the traditional structure of a novel by blending of oral and written formats. In 1981, Mariama Bâ died before the publication of her second novel *Un chant écarlate* [*Scarlet Song* (1986)] which was published posthumously. Unlike *So Long a Letter*, *Scarlet Song* is a male Bildungsroman, in which the male character is at the centre of the story.[9] In both novels, she uses standard French literary patterns and techniques in complementary association with the Wolof oral features of her own cultural traditions. Moreover, in her novels, she questions the way women have been portrayed traditionally by African male writers who early on dominated the African literary scene. As far as négritude is concerned, writing within and against established traditions, Bậ interrogates the way women have been depicted and idealised.[10] As quoted in Mineke Schipper's article, Bậ writes: "We no longer accept the nostalgic praise to the African Mother who, in his anxiety, man confuses with Mother Africa."[11] This statement has profound implications; on the one hand, it is a call for a different direction in African literature. On the other hand, it is directed at négritude. The critical tone Bậ sets in the statement quoted above frames my reading of *Scarlet Song* as a critique of négritude aesthetics and its intersection with Wolof patriarchy. Rather than solely focusing on the female characters, Bậ's critical attention is also turned on her male characters and the society including the patriarchal system that structures its cultural aesthetics. Such an approach brings a new

[9] Bậ employs the technique of the Bildungsroman of formation-to underscore the development of the protagonist's mind and character.

[10] Négritude especially promotes a literary aesthetics that, among other things, constructs an idealized image of la femme noire, 'the black woman'. Dark, beautiful, regal, and unspoiled, she is canonized in one of Leopold Sédar Senghor's poems, 'Femme noire', written as a praise song to the beauty and 'naturalness' of the African woman. The archetypal femme noire becomes an enduring symbol in a recurring double motif in négritude creative writings.

[11] Mineke Schipper, 'Mother Africa on the pedestal: the male heritage in African literature and criticism', *African Literature Today*, 15 (1987) 35-54.

understanding to the restrictive politics of négritude when the political and personal are blended, as will be discussed in this chapter.

Much of the scholarship on Bâ's *Scarlet Song* has examined themes of the female condition, modernity, politics, ecocriticism, and religion. Yet very little attention is devoted to the study of masculinity.[12] Although *Scarlet Song* is a novel of male development, several critics have focussed their attention on the female characters. For instance, Ibeyemi Mojola in her analysis of 'The Onus of Womanhood: Mariama Bâ and Zaynab Alkali' (1997), points out that *Scarlet Song* contains complex themes. However, Mojola excludes the issues related to masculinity in the novel.[13] Similarly, in 'Mapping Out 'Self': A Reading of Scarlet Song Conforming to Josselson's Theory of Women's Identity Development (2016)', A.V. Joey argues that Bâ's *Scarlet Song* deals primarily with "the critically urgent need for women to create 'empowered' spaces for themselves".[14] Their discussions of the novel, however, focuses on the examination of the oppression of female characters while male characters are ignored.[15] To contribute to the study of gender in the novel, this chapter examines Bâ's depiction of postcolonial Senegalese masculinity in *Scarlet Song*. In particular, it sheds light on the depiction of the bewilderment experienced by postcolonial Wolof men after independence.

I argue, in this chapter, that a balance between négritude and universalism is presented as a more meaningful way of engaging with the expectations of postcolonial

[12] Masculinity in Bâ's novel has been discussed by Sylvester Mutunda in his doctoral thesis. See, Sylvester Mutunda, 'Through A Female Lens: Aspects of Masculinity in Francophone African Women's', unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Arizona, 2009, p. 87 *http://hdl.handle.net/10150/194161 [accessed* 6-Jul-2017].
[13] Ibeyemi Yemi Mojola, 'The Onus of Womanhood: Mariama Bâ and Zaynab Alkali', in *Writing African Women: Gender, Popular Culture and Literature in West Africa*, ed. by Stephanie Newell (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1997), pp. 126-36.
[14] A.V Joey, 'Mapping Out 'Self': A Reading Of Scarlet Song Conforming To Josselson's Theory Of Women's Identity Development', *Research Journal of English Language and Literature*, 4.2 (2016), p. 202 <202-209 A.V. JOEY.pdf (rjelal.com)> [16 December 2016].
[15] For instance, see Jeanette Treiber in 'Feminism and Identity Politics: Mariama Bâ's *Un chant Écarlate*', *Research in African Literatures* 4 (1996).

Wolof masculinity. I contend that Bâ presents her male protagonist, Ousmane, as a disoriented postcolonial Senegalese young man and recounts his failed attempt to restore his agency and resolve his dilemma through both assimilation to French Western culture and his return to négritude. On the one hand, I posit that *Scarlet Song* thematises the paralysing effects of subverting Wolof norms and adopting French assimilation in search for self-fulfilment using irony. On the other hand, I suggest that Bậ dramatizes Ousmane's persistent crisis even after his return to his origins, exposing the flaw of being obsessed with négritude, in postcolonial Senegal. Instead, Bâ shows that taking a more balanced stance between négritude and assimilation leads to self-fulfilment.

Bâ's *Scarlet Song* is set in post-independent Senegal in the late 1960s and follows the love story of a white woman, Mireille de La Vallée, and a Senegalese man, Ousmane Gueye who fight through cultural differences for their love. Mireille's father, the French diplomat, the Koranic scholar father, and over-protective mother of Ousmane do not approve their marriage. Later, Ousmane travels to Paris, where he and Mireille secretly marry after she has converted to Islam (Ousmane's religion), believing that they can successfully overcome barriers of race, class, and national origin. But after their return to Senegal, Ousmane's extended family and community soon pressure him into taking a second wife. Therefore, Ousmane begins to feel that his marriage to Mireille undermines his patriarchal privileges as a Senegalese husband and that he needs to uphold customs in relation to marriage as a black African. Thus, he favours Ouleymatou, a semi-literate Senegalese woman, and abandons Mireille and his son. The novel ends tragically with Mireille becoming insane, destroying both her child and Ousmane.

1. Ousmane's search for self-fulfilment: Mimicry and Disillusionment

The first section of this chapter will be devoted to Ousmane's attempt to fully attain self-fulfilment through assimilation. In this section, I argue that, on a personal level, adopting French colonial assimilation is shown to be effective in restoring Ousmane' confidence in his manhood. However, on a social level, it culminates in Ousmane's 'othering'.[16] As it stands, Bâ underlines throughout the novel the double-bind situations that provoke Ousmane's ambivalence. The colonial history of Senegal and the community continue to inform social formations and remain significant within Wolof youth identity, an issue Ousmane disregards and is criticised for throughout his journey for self-fulfilment. As such, I find it useful to draw on Frantz Fanon and Homi Bhabha's ideas on the impact of colonial legacy, in this section, to demonstrate the complex tension between 'mimicry' and 'négritude' and its effects on the male protagonist, Ousmane. Moreover, I believe that irony is useful to analyse such discrepancies that Bậ aimed to point out in the novel.

To start with, in *Scarlet Song*, Bâ reveals that Ousmane's defiance of the Senegalese gender norms, at an early age, is traumatic. The subversion of Wolof indigenous customs, in the novel, is first epitomised during Ousmane's childhood when he performs feminine chores. According to the division of gender roles in Senegal, it is the girls, the women-to-be, who help mothers with domestic chores. However, being the first born in the family, Ousmane's mother prepares him to be her "arms and legs" (8). Like any given cultural context, male and female behaviour patterns, in Senegal, are fixed by norms, and anyone who tries to break the rules can expect to meet with serious

[16] Othering is a term coined by Gayatri Spivak to refer to the process by which imperial discourse produces its 'others'. Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Studies,* p. 171. Throughout this chapter, I will use the term 'other' to refer to Ousmane's construction and representation of his 'self' as the 'other', which distinguishes him from his Wolof community.

problems in a community in which the ruling group produces images and conceptions of the others to legitimise the status quo. Therefore, this leads Ousmane to be rejected by his girlfriend Ouleymatou. Being rejected by Ouleymatou, Ousmane's consciousness is shown to be tormented by embarrassment and feelings of shame. As such, the novel shows that subverting gender norms has devastating effects on Ousmane's identity, not only as a young adolescent, but also on his identity formation as a Senegalese man in a postcolonial country.

Ousmane's response to his adolescence trauma can be discerned through an adoption of emotional detachment towards black women during his adolescence. Every time he approaches a girl, the fear of shame overcomes him, as it is described in the following passage:

> Whenever he had felt himself beginning to fancy any girl, after the Ouleymatou experience, the memory of the mocking indifference and his own disillusionment had made him fiercely determined to nip any emotional attachment in the bud. For him, all women were as selfish, disdainful, pretentious, and hard as Ouleymatou. He drew back from any temptation. He imagined all the gossip about him and the sly sniggers this would inspire. He kept his distance to prevent any hurtful whispers of "that's the young man who used to do the sweeping and go to buy dried fish!" (11).

According to the third person narration in the passage, fear predominates in Ousmane's imaginary gossip, revealing the intense impact of mockery on him as an adolescent. It is this very reason which motivates Ousmane to avoid black women. In fact, Ousmane would have never adopted distance, if he had experienced a good adolescence. Roger

Kurtz defines trauma as a "pathological mental and emotional condition, an injury to the psyche caused by catastrophic events, or by the threat of such events, which overwhelm an individual's normal response mechanisms". [17] Indeed, Bâ's representation of Ousmane's response towards his trauma shares clear resonances with Roger Kurtz's definition, as it is evident through his repression of emotions. The black woman is seen through Ousmane's mind's eye differently. In his current view, the black African woman is transformed into a "selfish, disdainful, pretentious and hard" woman (11). The implication here is that the less he fancies a girl ("drew back, distance"), the less he is hurt ("hurtful whispers" 11). In other words, for Ousmane, emotional detachment brings security. Therefore, we can deduce that Bâ uncovers how non-conformity to Wolof norms around gender roles can provoke traumatic experiences. What is also emphasised here is that mockery and gossip are means of upholding gender norms and controlling behaviours. As it is the case with Ousmane, trauma influences his actions and thoughts towards black women in order to avoid further torment.

The distance adopted towards the black African woman, in the novel, has a symbolic significance and can be interpreted as a distance from 'Mother Africa' [the land]. In the course of the novel, the female character, Ouleymatou is revealed as the ultimate symbol of 'Mother Africa', thereby validating négritude precepts as expressed by Léopard Sédar Senghor. As such, if Ouleymatou is 'Mother Africa' as Ousmane views her when he adjusts his perspective, the distance he adopts can also be applied to Africa the land. This is evident when Ousmane declares his return to his origins, symbolised by his reunion with Ouleymatou, which implies that he has been detached from the African

[17] 'Introduction', *Trauma and Literature, ed. by* Roger J. Kurtz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 2. <https://doi-org.liverpool.idm.oclc.org/10.1017/9781316817155>.

background as well. As such, distancing himself from the black African woman similarly symbolizes his detachment from his native origins.

Ousmane's journey to search for self-fulfilment and freedom is epitomised in the novel through approaching a white woman. In *Soul on lce*, Eldridge Cleaver stated that, for oppressed blacks, the white woman is the symbol of freedom. He went on to say that she is especially desirable because unlike himself and the black woman she is not submissive.[18] Similarly, in *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon emphasizes that oppressed black people often seek to liberate themselves by choosing a woman with lighter skin: her love could make him less black; the whiter the freer. This liberation, he writes, would be best symbolized by the "whitest woman, the blonde with the blue eyes".[19] According to Fanon, this kind of reasoning is based on norms of 'white superiority' which have been imposed by colonialism and by Western propaganda in films and magazines.[20] Similarly in *Scarlet Song*, Mireille symbolises freedom as she cuts Ousmane free from his past; she is an 'antidote' who frees him from the mockery of his own people. As it stands, this perspective explains Ousmane's attachment to Mireille as a symbol of liberation.

In addition to symbolising freedom, the white woman, in *Scarlet Song*, represents Western culture and assimilation. As a postcolonial elite from a working-class family, Ousmane falls within the main target of the French; to assimilate Africans into the French lifestyle. Omofolabo Ajayi contends that:

> The assimilation policy of the French colonial administration that gives the colonial subject, especially the male, an exclusive education in French culture

[18] Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Ice* (London: The Chaucer Press, 1969), p. 109.
[19] Fanon, *Black Skin*, p. 104.
[20] Ibid.,

> and scholarship, with the promise of French citizenship, leaves the Francophone subject in an ambiguous and compromised position. Inscribed within French imperialism, the implied supremacy of French citizenship and the designated inferiority of the colonized original citizenship cannot be missed. By the time the "chosen" African goes through the process of becoming "French", has become convinced of the worthlessness of his native culture.[21]

Indeed, in chapter 4 of the novel, the narrator calls attention to Ousmane's view regarding supremacy of the Western culture and inferiority of his origins at the beginning of his relationship with Mireille. His inferiority complex is manifest when "Ousmane listened. His pride and self-respect would not allow him to speak of the working-class neighbourhood of Usine Niari Talli. He erected a mental barrier between the aristocratic Mireille and the red earth walls of his parents" (20). This statement is so provocative. It proves that Ousmane suffers from an inferiority complex that renders him unable to disclose his origins. bell hooks, writing about blacks in North America, argues that:

> Black males must be made subordinate in as many cultural arenas as possible. Representations that socialize black males to embrace subordination as "natural" tend to construct a worldview where white men are depicted as all -powerful. To become powerful, then, to occupy that omnipotent location, black males (and white females) must spend their lives striving to emulate white men. This striving is the breeding ground among black males for a politics of envy that

[21] Omofolabo Ajayi, 'Negritude, Feminism, and the Quest for Identity: Re-Reading Mariama Bâ's *So Long a Letter*', *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 25 (1997), p. 38.

> reinforces the underlying sense that they lack worth unless they receive the affirmation of white males.[22]

It is obviously because of this that such critics as Florence Stratton regard Ousmane as conforming to the characteristics of the colonized black man as they are described by Frantz Fanon in his pioneering work, *Black Skin, White Masks*. She states, "in Fanon's terms, Ousmane suffers from both inferiority and dependency complexes, the outcome of his contact with western civilization in a colonial context".[23] In this respect, Ousmane suffers from the same inferiority complex as Nnaife in Emecheta's *The Joys Of Motherhood* (1979), as has been discussed in the previous chapter. This, in turn, underscores that colonialism continues to affect the colonized even after independence while Mireille stands as a symbol for Ousmane's assimilation.

In this regard, to overcome his complexities and heal his wounds, Ousmane seeks to attain a status equal to that held by the white man. Such an equation is manifest, in the novel, through an interior monologue when Ousmane compares himself to "the hero of a Corneille drama" (36). This portrayal affirms Frantz Fanon's claim that the black "subjectively adopts a white man's attitude" through his identification with the white heroes in the books he reads.[24] Fanon asks, "but a white woman can do this for me?": "by loving me she proves that I am worthy of white love. I am loved like a white man … I marry white culture, white beauty, white whiteness".[25] From these statements, we might understand that by comparing himself to the "hero of a Corneille drama", Ousmane adopts a white man's attitude. Therefore, he takes on the white mask, since as all he desires is,

---

[22] bell hooks, 'Doing It For Daddy', in *Constructing Masculinities,* ed. by Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis, and Simon Watson (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 99.
[23] Florence Stratton, *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender* (London: Taylor & Francis 1994), p. 152.
[24] Fanon, *Black Skin*, p. 104.
[25] Ibid., p. 45.

in Frantz Fanon's words, "to be a man among other men […] to come lithe and young into a world".[26] This seems to imply that Ousmane mimics the white man through Mireille's love towards him.

It might be claimed, therefore, that while Ousmane strives for an equal status with the white man, he also tenaciously opposes négritude ideals. This can be justified through his perspective on universalism and négritude. The négritude movement began in Paris among black intellectuals and grew in response to the French imperialist policy of forced assimilation. It is a philosophical concept noted for its thematic constructs of 'Mother Africa' and an idealized African womanhood.[27] Opposed to these values is Ousmane's marriage to a white woman and his equal relationship with his wife, Mireille. He even appreciates her French lifestyle. As the narrator informs us, in the early stages of their marriage, "Ousmane Gueye appreciated his environment …. Her enthusiasm amused Ousmane" (82). In another reference, the narrator reveals that Mireille an equal partner, in the relationship, the ideal companion, and the "flaming torch lighting up his path" (84). In addition, amidst a clamour of opposition with his friends who support négritude, Ousmane views that "culture is universal. Culture is an instrument of development. How can you achieve this without self-knowledge which leads to self-respect, and without knowledge of and respect for others?" (47). This statement displays strong dichotomies between adopting universalism and embracing négritude, which guide Ousmane's thinking. Overall, such viewpoint depicts Ousmane as a young Senegalese man, whose purpose is to serve as a contrast to hegemonic masculinity of his friends and that of previous generations, which are shown to be obsessed with négritude.

[26] Ibid., 85.

[27] Leopold Sédar Senghor, from Senegal in West Africa, popularized négritude a great deal both as a creative aesthetic and political philosophy when he became the president of his country (1960-1980).

As an outcome, Bâ exposes an example of an ironic situation associated with the double-bind to provide depth to her characterisation of Ousmane and a twist to her plot.[28] On a personal level, mimicry in the novel is shown to be nurturing, for it restores Ousmane's confidence in himself. The narrator informs us that "Mireille easily wiped out any lingering memory of Ouleymatou. She was the antidote to the poison in Ousmane's heart; she restored his confidence; she overcame his defences" (22). This statement reveals that Mireille's love of Ousmane restores his confidence not only as a man, but mainly as a black colonised African. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin pinpoint that ambivalence "characterizes the way in which colonial discourse relates to the colonized subject, for it may be both exploitative and nurturing, or represent itself as nurturing, at the same time".[29] In the novel, Mireille retains a symbolic function and might be considered a proxy for the black woman. With such instances which mark Ousmane's feelings of strong connection and association with the white culture, the novel illustrates moments of strength which serve to mitigate the perception of mimicry as solely exploitative. This relationship with Mireille and white culture, however, as I will illustrate below, is also riddled with ironies and ambivalences, an aspect which complicates Ousmane's life.

On another level, Bâ gives full expression to unexpected contradictory impulses. The discrepancy Bâ is pointing out is that while the novel exposes Ousmane's perception of assimilation as nurturing, it also advocates a view that his longing for self-fulfilment through mimicry leads to ambivalence and dilemma. The double outcome of the situational irony here serves to foreground the experience of the 'self' versus the 'community' and highlight Ousmane's tormenting dilemma. Both Mireille and

[28] The type of situational irony I discuss in this section of this chapter differs from other ironies explored in the previous chapters as it exhibits an outcome of both win and loss at the same time. This category of situational irony will be discussed in chapter 5 to highlight the double-bind outcome of Akin's plan.
[29] Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Studies*, p. 13.

Ousmane's cultural origins are shown to be of equal importance to him. As Ousmane attempts to break the shackles that tie him, the omniscient narrator describes his mental struggle in the following passage:

> He shivered with foreboding. Tentacles held him in their crushing grip. The more he strove to *break free* the tighter the coils enfolded him. How could he escape without amputating a part of himself? How could he escape without bleeding to death? But his heart leapt. Mireille, radiant in her photographs, held out her invitation. He shook his head … "on the one side Mireille … On the other, my people … My parents … (38).

In his answer to his endless questions, the gossip of his people is shown to be haunting his mind like the bewilderment of his adolescence. He imagines himself in Usine Niari Talli, where he shall be a "guena het", a "traitor" to his people, and "his behaviour will be denounced" (38), which articulates a sense that Ousmane's identity is inherently constructed in relation to the community. Ousmane displays what Robert J.C. Young calls a complex mix of attraction and repulsion at the same time.[30] This is evident when he thinks about his parents imagining that their reaction will be as hostile as that of Mireille's parents "they would express the same horror and disgust" (38). Such knowledge also points to his understanding of the expectations placed on him based on his Islamic upbringing.[31] Therefore, "he had to give serious thought to his position, that he had to make a choice between two irreconcilable decisions, which either way would bring

[30] Robert. J.C Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 161.
[31] One of the basics of marriage in Islam is that both husband and wife should be Muslims. As it is in this novel, Mireille adopts Islam as her religion, a condition given by Ousmane so that his family in Dakar would accept her.

heartache … on the one side, my heart draws me to a white girl … on the other, my own people. My reason fluctuates between the two, like the arm of a balance on which two objects of equal value are weighed" (36). The use of the simile 'like the arm of a balance' is significant, as it encapsulates his torment and the difficulty to choose between, on the one hand, the woman he loves and who nurtures his confidence and, on the other, his own people. It also hints at Ousmane's limited freedom to choose a wife outside of his culture, culminating in his ambivalence. Thus, there is a divide inside him. On the one hand, there is Mireille the symbol of white culture and freedom. On the other hand, there are his origins.

Furthermore, Bậ uses irony in her characterisation to expose Ousmane's misunderstanding of assimilation. Ousmane's dilemma can also be viewed as an outcome of his misconception of the insistent demands of his cultural identity. Collective existence and cultural heritage are depicted as a form of postcolonial resistance to assimilation, which the négritude movement aimed to advocate. The omniscient narrator reveals:

> Reject the Usine Niari Talli district? Escape from its clutches? Spew up its strength? It was tempting! But his home kept a tight grip on him. These loud voices in his ear, singing in unison of traditional values, urging obedience to the dictates of a collective existence, these were the voices of his birthplace. Any departure from the norm, any violent change was a source of bewilderment, derision or indignation. The torch of his cultural heritage lighting up the only path for him to follow … Minds fossilised by the antiquated ideas of the past … protected by their armour-plating, manners and customs were safe against attack (36).

This passage pinpoints the different ways in which the community influences individuals' identities. Collective existence works on Ousmane's senses and brings back into his consciousness the recollections of the past. According to this passage, postcolonial resistance stands as an opposition against social and cultural change. The 'home' in this passage signifies belonging. That Ousmane has been taught that "God punishes traitors" (37) points to his understanding of the outcome of not conforming to the expectations placed on him. Eventually, however, Ousmane is much more infatuated by white culture: he decides to marry Mireille and assimilate to French culture and values.

While the text invites reflection on the complex ways in which social identity is inextricably bound up with the spatial world surrounding Ousmane, the novel also displays Ousmane's ambivalence. Bâ's construction of Ousmane illustrates the thinking of Homi Bhabha. With the notion of 'mimicry', Bhabha refers to the ambivalence of colonial discourse. The copying of the coloniser's culture, behaviour, and values, according to Bhabha, is "at once a resemblance and menace" (86).[32] Even though Ousmane is aware that choosing a wife outside the community is considered as an act of treason, he opts for treason while still conforming to some Islamic norms. This is evident when he asks Mireille to convert to Islam as a condition for their marriage. Indeed, Ousmane exhibits signs of mimicry by choosing to marry Mireille, but he still takes into account the teachings of Islam and the outcomes of disobeying them evident through Islamic warnings.

However, in addition to provoking Ousmane's dilemma, irony shows that this way of reclaiming one's masculinity based on 'mimicry' fails to produce the desired effect. Accepting the white mask, and thus passing for a French-speaking man who has received

[32] Homi Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse', *The MIT Press*, 28 (1984), p. 86 <Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse on JSTOR> [accessed 30 April 2021]

a Western education as a 'civilized man' is, according to Homi Bhabha, a subversive act because it proves the impossibility of equating education and western-ness with power and capital. Hence, Ousmane's experience with mimicry unveils a deeper sense of disillusionment, which substantiates Bhabha's argument that mimicry is the process by which the colonised subject is reproduced as "almost the same, but not quite".[33] Bhabha suggests that "mimicry emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge".[34] He adds that its threat comes from "the prodigious and strategic production of conflictual, fantastic, discriminatory "identity effects" in the play of a power that is elusive because it hides no essence, no 'itself'".[35] From the same vein, Amal Treacher Kabesh argues that mimicry can ultimately make the postcolonial man lose face once it becomes clear that he himself is a fiction, a copy of the imagined original, and that his position is one of submission to the (former) colonialist.[36] This argument is exemplified when the ineffectiveness of Ousmane's self-making becomes quite clear to the outside world, as it breaches traditional norms much to the disapproval of both families as well as their community. At this point in the novel, the irony shows that Ousmane is made aware of the complexity and discrepancy of belonging to different cultures and class systems. Therefore, Ousmane's move towards self-determination and elusive empowerment, which manifests itself in the rejection of pre-colonial ideals of Wolof masculinity in favour of Mireille's love and assimilation, turns out to be a deception. In this regard, we come into a typically ironic situation in which assimilation culminates further in Ousmane's bewilderment. The romantic relationship, as the later scenes evidence, is far from ideal: its stability is continuously threatened by domestic disharmony as there is a jarring cultural and social gap between the partners. Perceiving

[33] Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man', p. 86.
[34] Ibid., p. 126.
[35] Ibid., p. 131.
[36] Amal Treacher Kabesh, *Postcolonial Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 80-81.

himself to belong to a 'higher' social class, Ousmane rejects any association with the rural folk, an issue that invokes antagonism from the community and his mother. To start with, when Mireille and Ousmane come to settle in Dakar, they face many pressures creating rifts between the couple. Assuming that his mother, Yaye Khadi, will be proud of him by bringing a white wife, she turns to be the first who opposes such interracial marriage, for several reasons, the main one being because she is unhappy that her son has married a woman whom she has not chosen, and who is not particularly from the same race and caste. She claims that she would find out the antidote to the spell by which the "daughter of the devil" had bewitched her son. What is being emphasized here is the role a mother figure plays in the life of her son. The negative image of Yaye Khadi is further enhanced when the narrator comments that "she had been the cause of something indefinable but essential deserting the couple's relationship" (95). The initial description gives a basic insight into her behaviour and character. In fact, she does not "spare a thought for the other woman for all that she was white, had also given birth, loved, and hoped" (74). Thus, Ousmane's mother here is presented as participating in a rebellion against the marriage which obliges him to succumb obediently to his mother. What can be deduced here, is that Bậ replicates the culturally deeply rooted perceptions of inter-racial marriage. Her racist attitude toward Mireille reveals that she is not ready to tolerate a white woman in her family, which coincides with Mireille's family's racist attitudes towards Ousmane. Therefore, Ousmane's mother sets her mind on disrupting the relationship between the couple. Therefore, Ousmane's adopted strategy of reshaping his subjectivity by adopting a white mask and challenging the Wolof patriarchal norms proves to be 'futile'.

Returning to the convergences between Ousmane and Mireille, I argue that *Scarlet Song* uncovers a sharp discrepancy between fantasy and reality. This is explicitly

expressed through Ousmane's questioning of his position. This is evident when he tells his friend about the battle between his emotions and his reason:

> I'm still the same person I always was. But a man is a complicated mixture of aspirations. And it's difficult to combine all the conditions for his self-fulfilment. I realise that I have in Mireille a wife who loves me. But when I'm with her, I have a depressing feeling of dissatisfaction, of something lacking. Then things began to go wrong … added to this, there is the mutual antagonism between my wife and my mother … the misunderstandings between Mireille and my friends … naturally, you stand up for her __ but all the others who, to use her own words, "violate our home" (139).

The passage above is an ironic example in which Ousmane is criticised for not taking into account the double-bind of assimilation policy. His longing for self-fulfilment through assimilation drives him to disregard all the Islamic teachings and upbringing he received. In my view, the 'man' Ousmane refers to in the passage is not any man, but it is a 'mimic' man who experiences attraction and repulsion at the same time. As a result, Ousmane's ambivalence culminates in reverting to sex-roles within marriage which he has earlier rejected. For instance, he stops helping Mireille with household chores, telling her that the kitchen is considered the woman's arena and taking care of household chores is her duty. Here we can see a shift in his masculinity that forces him to rethink his values and return to his origins, highlighting a fluctuation in his identity. The novel exploits the experience of nostalgia and longing to the past to foreground the tension between elusive yearning to power and felt experiences, where Ousmane ultimately rejects his romantic

relationship, to cling, instead, to conceptions of his native culture, as will be revealed in the next section of this chapter.

2. Postcolonial resistance: Négritude, Patriarchy, and Gender Politics

From the outset, Ousmane is placed in multiple contexts where he is forced to re-examine himself and question his actions as he faces different circumstances and must interact with family and especially his friends who defend cultural authenticity or what is called négritude. The idea of an authentic culture, according to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, has been present in many recent debates about postcolonial cultural production, which raised the idea that "certain forms and practices are 'inauthentic', some decolonizing states arguing for a recuperation of authentic pre-colonial traditions and customs". [37] Essentially a philosophical concept in the struggles against colonial imperialism in Africa, négritude valorises black pride and civilization, emphasizing especially the underlying humanism of African cultures. Developed in the 1930s, it reverberates still in some literary and political circles despite questions raised about its representation of African cultures. Négritude can be discerned in *Scarlet Song* as Ousmane's vision of the past is ostensibly clouded with a sense of longing and nostalgia and is haunted by childhood reminiscences. His perception is also troubled by anxiety and the fear of being seen assimilated by his family and friends. Therefore, Ousmane is shown to be obsessed by the issue of négritude as a form of postcolonial resistance to assimilation and as a source of African male pride. Ousmane's shift in perspective is evident as he, now, sees the black woman from a different angle. The black woman, who

[37] Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Studies*, p. 21.

is at another point considered by Ousmane as 'selfish' and 'hard', is transfigured into an epitome of a true African traditional woman, a correlative of his mood at that time of confusion and bewilderment. Moreover, Ousmane equates Ouleymatou to Africa when he declares: "I did well to renew the contract. This is my return to my roots" (103). His changing perspective resonates with his belief in négritude, a philosophical concept noted for its thematic constructs of 'Mother Africa' and an idealized African womanhood in its literary quest for an African political identity.

This image, I argue, reveals the fluctuating nature of his masculinity as a postcolonial educated man in newly independent Senegal. This is first manifest when Ousmane gradually slips into the role of a traditional patriarchal husband who allots a subordinate role to his wife as he feels that his marriage to Mireille has called his credentials, as a Senegalese Muslim male, into question. The "mental barrier between the aristocratic Mireille and the red earth walls of his parents" (20) is now made concrete. As Mireille declares: '"we saw everything through the same eyes before we were married', … 'but now we seem to be divided over everything'" (91). From these lines, we can assume that Mireille is no more seen through Ousmane' eyes, but he is influenced by the perspective of his family and surrounding. This issue provokes a series of conflicts and distress to both Ousmane and Mireille.

Consequently, in *Scarlet Song*, the rebellion of the mind against the heart takes place in the everyday life with Mireille. The defeated 'mind' is made significant in Ousmane's new perspective towards Mireille: "Ousmane considered that his wife was possessive, 'self-centred'. The word had slipped into his mind and now it haunted him …" (82). This is first apparent in a scene where he refuses to make his marriage egalitarian and rejects any compromise with Mireille, claiming that as a man, it is "only his voice that counts" (86), and she must simply listen. Thus, he argues that "any compromise was

synonymous with surrender. He countered Mireille's 'stubbornness' with 'the hardening of his own position'. Even when he was in the wrong, he would not give in any compromise, any backing down seemed to him the abdication of his own personality" (99). While this passage might be considered as a mere technical device introducing readers to the novel's deployment of focalization, it simultaneously draws attention to Ousmane's conformity to hegemonic masculinity. In 'Feminism and Identity Politics: Mariama Bâ's *Un chant écarlate*', Jeanette Treiber states that Mireille and Ousmane "act out their individual ideologies in a hideous power play. Their everyday life becomes a battle in which each attempt to assert his or her power".[38] While I agree with Treiber, I contend that Ousmane loses his 'self' in his search for acceptance as the omniscient narrator reveals: "Ousmane stared at her [Mireille] without a single gesture of affection, to avoid vexing his mother" (95). Hiding his affection towards Mireille highlights the antagonistic relationship between love and reason, exemplified though the loss of control over his life. His love for Mireille is replaced by feelings of insecurity. While looking at the past through the veil of nostalgia, Ousmane's actions are socially mediated and culturally constructed, as demonstrated in his daily life.

At this stage in the novel, Ousmane feels the incongruence between imagination and reality, highlighting the persisting fragility of his character. This shift in Ousmane's perspective is viewed by critics as an outcome of colonialism. In his doctoral thesis, 'Through A Female Lens: Aspects of Masculinity in African Women's Writing' (2009), Sylvester Mutunda argues that it is because of colonialism that Ousmane has changed his behaviour towards his wife Mireille. He opines:

[38] Jeanette Treiber, 'Feminism and Identity Politics: Mariama Bâ's *Un chant Écarlate'*, *Research in African Literatures*, 27.4 (1996), p. 114-15 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3819989> [accessed 02 September 2019]

> At this point it is fair to say that Ousmane himself has changed. His attitude is reminiscent of the colonial argument that many African intellectuals put forward. This argument has to do with colonialism and its effects on Africans … When Ousmane and Mireille first married, colonialism was not an issue; now that he feels the need to exercise his masculinity, Ousmane wants to use colonialism as an excuse".[39]

From a similar point of view, Njoya Wandia contends that in *Scarlet Song* colonial assimilation distorts healthy perceptions of sexuality and marriage. Wandia states, "when Ousmane finally marries Mireille, he cannot reconcile himself to the fact that she comes from the country that colonized his own. He therefore seeks consolation in Ouleymatou but tragically applies the assimilation discourse he despises".[40] While I agree that colonialism plays a role in the process of Ousmane's assimilation, I contend that the apparent reason why Ousmane's masculinity shifts is because of the pressures from his family and friends. Moreover, I contend that Ousmane's adolescent trauma might be still haunting his consciousness, as illustrated through his fear of losing his position and respect in the eyes of his family and amidst his community. In other words, he yearns to show his family as well as his community that despite his Western education and his marriage to a white woman, he has not renounced his patriarchal tradition. Unlike Ousmane, his cousin Lamine has not experienced trauma. Although his family and community believe that he is assimilated into white culture, considering him "a lost soul" (98), Lamine's perspective remains fixed. With this in mind, Lamine's family's thinking

[39] Mutunda, 'Through A Female Lens', p. 87.
[40] Njoya Wandia, 'On Mariama Bâ's Novels, Stereotypes, and Silence', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 27.2 (2007), p. 454-55 <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/220775 . Retrieved 15/12/2018.

echoes Aduke Adebayo's assertion that: "the ultimate goal of the French colonial policy was to frenchify the African in every conceivable way especially through a highly structured administrative system, Western education and the Christian religion. The end product of such process was the 'evolué'".[41] The ideal man according to this thinking is characterised by immersing "himself in the heart of his own race, to live according to black values and the rhythmic beat of the tomtom … to assume with fervour his own cultural heritage"" (92), the new vision Ousmane adopts.

Therefore, the new shift to négritude makes Ousmane feel secured. While he has nothing in common with Mireille's past, "Ouleymatou had become his true soulmate" (121). Their union is described in more details in the following passage:

> [she is] the woman in whom he recognized the extension of himself. She was, as Mabo Dialli so rightly sang, at one and the same time his roots, his stock, his growth, his flowering. They were linked by their common origin: the same ancestors, the same skies. The same soil! The same traditions! Their souls were excited by the same causes. Neither Ousmane nor Ouleymatou could disclaim this common essence without distorting their very natures, cultural heritage was taking its pitiless revenge. It was reclaiming its due and revealing to Ousmane the endpoint of his flight (121).

According to the passage, the character of Ouleymatou is revealed as the ultimate symbol of 'Mother Africa', thereby validating négritude precepts. These explanatory details divert readers' attention from the narrative flow to ponder the commonalities between

[41] Aduke Adebayo, 'The African Mother: Her Changing Perceptions in West African Fiction', in *African Masculinities: Men in Africa from the Late Nineteenth Century to the Present*, ed. by Robert Morrell and Lahoucine Ouzgane (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 2.

Ousmane and Ouleymatou. She represents a true Muslim African woman who respects his beliefs, follows his culture, and fulfils his needs that Mireille fails to understand. She is supportive and endeavours to be the perfect nurturer who provides a stable home base for her husband and a house open to an endless stream of in-laws. As the eternal Mother Africa/African mother, the duty of the négritude woman is to preserve the homestead intact for the return of the culturally famished soul of the man who is away, alone in Europe, assimilating the mechanisms of the colonial culture. It is the only way she can be 'blessed'. It is within this haze of schism and assimilation that négritude constructs its image of an idealized African woman and the archetypal 'Mother Africa'.

Further, the novel implies that having negotiated successfully both the African indigenous and the alien colonial, imperial values, Ousmane emerges as the natural spokesperson for the new times unfolding in his culture. In possessing Oulaymatou, Ousmane establishes a link with himself. The authorial voice states categorically that:

> In his mind he confused Ouleymatou with Africa, an Africa which has to be restored to its prerogatives, to be helped to evolve! He becomes the referential "I" of power who names others. He is a soldier of the liberating army and his newly acquired knowledge is reconfigured as Negritude, the weapon to free the continent When he was with the African woman, he was the prophet of the 'word made truth', the merish with the unstinting hands, providing nourishment for body and soul. And these roles suited his deep involvement (149-50).

Oulaymatou, then, symbolically stands as the rallying force motivating Ousmane into action. In the négritude construct, Ouleymatou is envisioned as the antidote to colonialism and what it stands for, domination and the destruction of African cultural values.

Therefore, she must be kept 'natural' and protected from foreign contamination, so the culture and the identity of Africa remain intact. Njoya Wandia agrees with Juliana Nfah-Abbenyi that the above passage constitutes "the strongest feminist statement of the novel", but disagrees with her argument that Ousmane's misunderstanding reveals how African women are idealized to suit the claims of black nationalism.[42] Wandia, instead, claims that the author's "poignant insight into Ousmane's character expresses the paradox that when Ousmane speaks about the African woman, he necessarily speaks about himself as a colonial subject".[43] While I partially agree with these scholars' comments, I further suggest that the novel alerts us to the fact that Bậ unmasks the subjugation of the black woman, revealing how Ousmane's idealizing the black woman obfuscates her actual oppression in a patriarchal society. Moreover, I consider that Bâ, unlike African male authors, does not idealize the black woman in this novel. This is evident through Ouleymatou who represents the materialistic woman. I believe that through this response to the idealization of the black woman, Bâ shows more sympathy with Mireille despite her racial and cultural differences. In other words, the woman Bâ idealizes throughout this novel, I argue, is the white woman, Mireille. She is the true lover, the strong, and the faithful woman. As it stands, equating the African woman with Africa the land, can be read as a critical commentary on the négritude movement for its idealization of the woman, as will be discussed in the next section.

[42] Juliana Nfah-Abbenyi, *Gender in African Women's Writing: Identity, Sexuality, and Difference* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), p. 122.
[43] Wandia, 'On Mariama Bâ's Novels', p. 456.

3. Négritude and Tragedy

The last section of this chapter will discuss how tragedy is used in the novel to foreground Ousmane's persistent dilemma despite his return to his African cultural roots. In this section, I argue that although négritude, as a liberation theory for African cultures and peoples, seems to privilege male identity and bring stability, Ousmane is a critical construct whose function is to expose its inherent shortcomings and destructive impact on postcolonial Wolof masculinity. As such, I posit that Bâ shows that being obsessed with négritude, as a form of postcolonial resistance, leads to a fracture in identity and loss of the 'self'. Rather, I contend that the novel suggests a balanced stance between universalism and négritude, helping to overcome ambivalence.

Considering the ambivalence experienced by Ousmane as a mimic man, Bâ's text seems to align with négritude, hinting at stability and an idealisation of authenticity. Yet, it inspires a counter négritude vision that obsession with a return to origins in a postcolonial country is far from being ideal. To begin with, in the novel, Ousmane's nostalgia about the past does not only restore his African identity, but also leads to his dilemma. In effect, the narrative documents the persistence of Ousmane's bewilderment by highlighting that his return to his origins does not resolve the battle between his heart and mind. For instance, in a moment of confession to his friend Ali, "the voice of friendship sounded reasonable. But could he describe his daily battle between his emotions and his reason?" (139). This statement shows the ongoing condition of Ousmane's dilemma. Thus, this might be read as an attempt to resolve his dilemma when Ousmane agrees "to get involved with ancestral healing practices, which are also said to help in strengthening will-power and bringing people back to the straight and narrow path. But his reason had difficulty in finding its way amidst the tangle of tradition and custom" (145). The fact Ousmane is searching for remedies for his current situation uncovers his

feeling of loss and his aspiration to find his former self: "even if I'm not delivered, even if I don't get back my former self, I appreciate your loyal friendship" (146-7). Such an acknowledgment points to the fact that his return to the past proves to be futile as his 'self' is still lost. The last quotation can also be seen as a reflection on who Ousmane is, and what he has become because of his experiences with French culture. Frantz Fanon argued that colonialism denies the colonized "all attributes of humanity," thereby forcing them "to ask themselves the question constantly: ", who am I?".[44] Considering Fanon's argument, Ousmane's position implies that colonialism cannot be so easily separated from African traditions, and that both are responsible for prescribing impossible expectations on the colonized male.

The ambivalence I discussed in the first section when Ousmane is assimilated to French culture is still apparent after his return to négritude. In effect, the novel accentuates Ousmane's ambivalence further, foregrounding an ongoing oscillation between detachment and obsession with négritude. While Ousmane is ostensibly connected to his surroundings and traditional values by the means of clothing and listening to the 'tomtom' songs, he inwardly rejects his current mode of life. This is reinforced through Ousmane's ambivalence, which is ultimately demonstrated in chapter 8 where the narrator informs us that apart from showing Ousmane's dilemma, he simultaneously, feels nostalgic to return to his adolescent days "when everything was simple, including Mireille" (145). This episode also indicates that instead of getting rid of Mireille, Ousmane desires to choose Mireille again "if there is a choice to be made, it ought to fall on Mireille. Mireille alone, but, without any unkindness … what about Ouleymatou? If I find myself in this dilemma, it is because of her" (145). There is a palpable ambiguity in this scene. Here I think what the novel evokes is much more than a romantic nostalgic yearning, but a sense

[44] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 250.

of searching for the 'self'. Besides, his acknowledgment reveals that Mireille is not the source of his dilemma, but Ouleymatou. In this sense, the text indicates the discrepancy between being obsessed with négritude and assimilation.

Furthermore, the novel reveals that Ousmane's flaw, the obsession with négritude, leads to the destruction of his relationship with Mireille. It might be argued, here, that there is a call for the need to separate what is political from what is personal. Indeed, I posit that Bâ castigates the négritude ideal of manhood, as the fledging democratic nationalism which excludes gender democracy and, instead, becomes repressively patriarchal. Interweaving the personal crises of her characters with the political, Bâ seems to question whether the struggles for independence should not be applied to all facets of life, private and public, domestic, and political. Situated within this context, Lamine becomes the subversive counterpart of négritude. This subversive construct raises questions about gender hierarchy and the limitations of men while it proposes a different aesthetics of nationalist identity.

Through Ousmane's tragic end, Bâ underlines the reductive effect of confusing 'Mother Africa' (the land) with the African woman. As is illustrated by the novel, Ousmane's struggle to restore his agency provokes a fracture in his identity as his quest for self-fulfilment is extremely integrated within the structures of his society. The implication here is that gender concerns should not be integrated within nationalist constructions. Rather, it shows that négritude is a liberation theory for African cultures and peoples but not for gender. Indeed, the choice of Ousmane to return to his origins is restricting and destructive. Thus, Bâ is able to capture accurately the dilemma facing post-independence African men caught in a society straddled between a tenacious past and an indeterminate present, a society uncertain about the role it wants to ascribe to its menfolk.

Such an equation, then, creates complications for masculinity construction as shown through Ousmane's tragic end.

Therefore, with the encounter between the pre-colonial and the postcolonial, Bâ puts Ousmane in an impossible position, – one where he is meant to define himself as a modern African man. By situating him against the postcolonial patriarchs and the ludicrousness caused by the pressure of changing times, Bâ portrays a new era of African masculinity. She depicts Ousmane as a disoriented young man, who struggles to grasp national and gender identities that have been fractured by colonial history, the ongoing state of post coloniality in the 1960s Senegal.

Through the technique of character foils exhibited by Ousmane and his cousin Lamine, Bâ emphasizes not only traits characteristic of each character, but also to propose a balance between négritude and universalism as a feasible resolution for interracial marriages. In *Scarlet Song,* there is an antagonistic characterization which implies the contrasted behaviour and attitudes between Ousmane and his cousin, Lamine. Bâ underscores Lamine's open-mindedness, though he is seen by his family and community as assimilated into white culture because of his marriage with a white woman, Pierette. They consider him "a lost soul" (98), and that he lives the life of a white man in apparent rejection of his own culture. For instance, he receives comments such as: '"has he ever been seen inside a mosque?"' or '"has he ever been seen in traditional dress'" (98). After adjusting his perspective, Ousmane equally comments, "you are completely assimilated, old man" (98). He adds:

> you don't realize that you are betraying your true self. You live like a Toubab you think you like a Toubab. If it weren't for your skin, you wouldn't be an African anymore. You know you are deserting our ranks, just when we need

> trained men" (99) … the things you mention are trivial aspects of your behaviour. But you know perfectly well that the way one behaves governs the way one thinks. What you are losing is enormous. It's your African soul, your essence as an African. And that's serious, very serious! (100).

It might be understood, from these comments here, that patriarchy puts pressure on men by forcing them consciously or unconsciously to conform to its ideals. More importantly, however, it signifies that if one attempts to abandon some of them judgments of assimilation become inevitable. It is worth noting here that by centring these questions specifically on a male identity and on the construction of manhood, Bâ exposes a serious flaw in the politics of négritude.

Unlike Ousmane, these malicious comments did not worry Lamine. The narrator informs us that he "did not go about with one ear cocked for what 'his own people' had to say" (98). As the term "one ear" implies, Lamine is not submissive to what his surrounding says. Using direct definition, Lamine is described in the following passage, as someone who has:

> [an] open mind and was not tormented by ideological complexes. His negritude did not sit heavily on him. For him, it was neither a defect to be eradicated nor a value to be proved, but something to be accepted and lived with, without any obsession. None of his attitudes betrayed any sign of disquiet … he simplified his life by dissociating himself from African circles and adopting Western ways. He gaily turned his back on social conventions which had no real meaning for him (98).

Such characterisation resonates with Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan's suggestion that, "naming of a character's qualities counts as direct characterization only if it proceeds from the most authoritative voice in the text".[45] As such, the reader is implicitly then called upon to accept Lamine's definitions, which eventually contrast sharply with Ousmane's qualities after he shifts his perspective. Thus, it could be argued that Lamine is a kind of "new man" that Elisabeth Badinter positively describes as the "soft man" who is "warmer, gentler, more loving, and despises aggressivity".[46] In other words, he does not relate his masculinity to cultural patterns that subjugate women. However, critics like Njoya Wandia consider Lamine's behaviour as an outcome of assimilation and a disregard of African values. He contends:

> In *Scarlet Song*, Lamine ignores the history of assimilation that required Africans to disown their cultures. He defends his French wife's absence from family events … Lamine fails to realize that he is making no sacrifice since colonialism had already trained the elite to deny their cultures and given Europeans the privilege to defy them. In contrast to the elite, the nonelite do not idealize love.[47]

Wandia seems to neglect the fact that Lamine does not turn his back on all social conventions as assimilation requires. But I contend that Lamine is selective of the ones that are meaningful to him as the narrator has commented. In other words, Lamine is

[45] Rimmon-Kenan Shlomith, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 60.
[46] Elisabeth Badinter, *On Masculine Identity*, trans. by Lydia Davis (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p. 143.
[47] Wandia, 'On Mariama Bâ's Novels', p. 460.

selective about 'tradition' and 'modernity', to borrow Uzo Esonwanne's words, just as "a farmer would sort her seeds into viable and non-viable before planting".[48]

By revisioning négritude, Bâ articulates a masculinist aesthetics that is rooted in the protagonist's cultural experience: the intersection between négritude and assimilation. As a subversive construct of the original, Lamine is able to raise issues that still resonate with the fundamentals of the concept of négritude, the issues of a people's identity, and the dignity of a people's freedom and rights after independence. Evident here is a tendency that male characters, such as Lamine, who can speak and act independently, and have enough sense of personal identity face hostility from those who obsessively cling to authenticity. He, therefore, struggles in isolation to overcome the various injustices in their society. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin argue that "the problem with such claims to cultural authenticity is that they often become entangled in an essentialist cultural position in which fixed practices become iconized as authentically indigenous and others are excluded as hybridized or contaminated. This has as its corollary the danger of ignoring the possibility that cultures may develop and change as their conditions change".[49] In the light of this argument, it could be said that the novel evokes a criticism of négritude for its inflexibility and refusal to recognize the inevitable effects of colonialism on the elite, in particular.

Instead, Bâ shows that a balance between négritude and assimilation is what enables Lamine to lead a happy life. As the narrator comments, he "went happily on his way, with Pierrette at his side" and without involving her in his "obligatory" family visits (98). This statement proves that Lamine's primary desire is to have a peaceful and harmonious relationship with his wife. Through making a balance among his multiple

[48] Uzo Esonwanne, 'Enlightenment Epistemology and 'Aesthetic Cognition': Mariama Bâ's *So Long a Letter'*, in *The Politics of (M)Othering: Womanhood, Identity, and Resistance in African Literature,* ed. by Obioma Nnaemeka (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 91.
[49] Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Studies,* p. 21.

values in his search for peace in his marital relationship. This is explicitly expressed through the character of Lamine who argues, "how can it change a person to sit at the table and eat steak instead of rice? What harm does it do to me to spend my salary on my family instead of subsidizing a lot of idle parasites? And if to respect my wife and let her live happily in the way she chooses means that I've been colonized, well then, I've been colonized, and I admit it. I want peace. That doesn't mean I am a traitor to myself" (100). As it stands, Bâ makes us realize throughout Lamine's arguments that he adopts some Western values, but he does not abandon his African identity. This seeks to prove that not all social conventions must be blindly taken. Instead, he believes that some cultural patterns are of no meaning. In contrast to Ousmane, Lamine does not see his attitude as being 'effeminate'. In his advice to Ousmane, he urges him to be humane, accommodating, and more tolerant, to make concessions himself while demanding concessions from his wife, Mireille. He states, "if you're to be honest, you've got to make a choice. You want happiness without making any sacrifices. You won't make any concessions, while demanding concessions from others. Married life is based on tolerance and a human approach" (98-99). Based on these standards, Lamine is presented as a husband who considers a wife as an equal partner rather than as a subordinate, disregarding the racial barrier and all his people's comments. Moreover, Ousmane's hesitancy to make a choice evidences his longstanding ambivalence which destroys him as well as his marriage.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have discussed the fragility of post-independence Senegalese masculinity as depicted in Mariama Bâ *Scarlet Song* (1986). The first section has dealt with the novel's deployment of irony that sheds light on Ousmane's

disappointment towards French assimilation. I have explored Bậ's representation of the clash between the "self" and the "community" where Ousmane finds himself in a dilemma torn between his choice of his white wife and his people's expectations. The second section is Bậ's deployment of focalization as a technique to reflect Ousmane's shift in perspective towards universalism and négritude. The third and last section examined the use of tragedy to forecast Ousmane's dilemma even after his return to his origins, revealing his continuous disorientation. Moreover, through character foils, Bậ advocates that a compromise is needed to break down these racial and cultural differences that rock marital relationships. By this, she advocates feminism without dismissing the specificity of the African male experience and the different aspects that constitute a people's culture. Her novel combines the quest for African identity with individual independence; a separation between what is personal and political. It supports self-fulfilment and tolerance. It celebrates négritude but criticises obsession.

Chapter 4. The Crisis of Ghanaian Masculinity between Modernity and Tradition

Introduction

Chapter 3 sought to analyse Mariama Bâ's deployment of irony and tragedy in *Scarlet Song*. I suggest that these literary techniques together depict the instability of Senegalese post-colonial masculinity and shed light on the detrimental effects of the intersection of French colonial assimilation and Wolof patriarchal demands on the male characters. This chapter closely follows the previous in that it examines the process of post-colonial Sub-Saharan masculine subjectivity formation through the lens of the legacy of colonialism and patriarchy. In particular, I posit that Aidoo's novel is a continuation of Bậ's writing on Sub-Saharan men's suffering and disorientation due to changing ideas of marriage in the postcolonial era. These texts deal with different contexts, but they both deal with a postcolonial reality where traditional West African demands are prevalent. As such, this chapter examines how Oko, a modern middle class man depicted in *Changes* (1981), is similarly trapped between embracing modernity and conforming with the traditional Ghanaian patriarchy.[1] This chapter differs from Chapter 3 in that it critically looks at masculinity construction in modern Ghana in 1980s and considers the influence of male-female dynamics, family interference, and homosociality on Ghanaian masculinity.[2] The chapter aims to demonstrate and irony encompasses and foreground the extremeness of the crisis of masculinity in modern Ghana. This crisis is

[1] I use the concept of 'modernity' specifically to refer to the novel's representation of changes that took place in Ghana in the 1980s. Focussing on the socio-historical context of the novel aids in uncovering the fictional constructions of masculinity in several ways.

[2]The concept of homosociality throughout this section is used to refer to Oko's male friendship, but not of a romantic or sexual nature. I use the concept of homosociality to discuss attitudes to and representations of the toxic relationships between Oko and his friends. The term is explained in more details in what follows.

manifested through the Oko, who attempts to avoid hegemonic masculinity but ends up assimilating himself into pre-existing Ghanaian gendered order, much to his own detriment. I suggest that disconformity and conformity with hegemonic masculinity-based on female control in *Changes* is presented as humiliating and destructive.

Ama Ata Aidoo is an author, poet, playwright, and short-story writer who was born in Ghana in 1942. She was one of the first generation of graduates from the University of Ghana. She later taught English and African literature in various African and American universities. She has gained an international recognition because of her talent and dedication. Aidoo's writing is featured by her commitment as a writer who writes from a woman's perspective and whose writings touches on political matters and reflect some of her own experiences. Like Nwapa and Emecheta, Aidoo was influenced by Chinua Achebe and by oral tradition, particularly stories told by her mother.[3] However, unlike these authors, Aidoo mentioned that she is pre-occupied with African people from her perspective as a woman, a concern reflected throughout her novel *Changes: A Love Story*. Nonetheless, Aidoo's novel might be viewed as a continuation of Bâ's writing on Sub-Saharan men's suffering and disorientation due to changing ideas of marriage in the postcolonial era. These texts are written in different contexts, but they deal with a postcolonial reality where traditional West African demands are persistent.

Critical responses to *Changes* have offered a variety of perspectives. For instance, one of the most extensive books written on Aidoo, *Emerging Perspectives on Ama Ata Aidoo,* contains 22 essays on her works.[4] However, none of these essays is devoted to an in-depth analysis of the male characters as gendered subjects. Other scholars have focused on her art of crafting a blend of English literary forms with African oral traditions and on

[3] 'Ama Ata Aidoo', *In Their Own Voices: African women writers talk*, p. 19.
[4] See, *Emerging Perspectives on Ama Ata Aidoo*, ed. Ada Uzuamaka Azodo and Gay Wilentz (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1999).

the topic of love.[5] Moreover, the novel has been widely analysed from the angle of gender and feminist politics.[6] Sally McWilliams is among the critics who have hailed Aidoo as a voice of African feminism and observes that the book is an investigation of "how women's sexuality is circumscribed by (neo)colonialism, gender oppression, and compulsory heterosexuality".[7] Similarly, Pauline Uwakweh identifies, in *Changes*, a celebration of the spirit of the modern Ghanaian woman, particularly her status as independent and self-determining, and the dilemmas that modern changes trigger within the sociocultural milieu.[8]

However, current criticism around Aidoo's *Changes* has been limited in terms of the examination of male characters. Aidoo's representation of men and masculinity has been discussed by Theresah P. Ennin and Nii Okain Teiko.[9] While these scholars' central concern is with the changing conceptions of masculinity, a number of critics have

---

[5] See, Vivian Dzokoto and Glenn Adams in 'Analysing Ghanaian Emotions Through Narrative: A Textual Analysis of Ama Ata Aidoo's Novel *Changes' Journal Of Black Psychology*, 33.1, (2007) 94-112 <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0095798406295097>.<https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0095798406295097> This article examines emotional expression in the novel, illuminating the mutual constitution of culture and feeling in contemporary Ghana.

[6] Subsumed under the feminist analyses of her female characters, attention has mainly focused on the domination of women by men as an oppressive force in women's lives. Aidoo's depictions of female professionals in the decade after Ghana's independence have attracted new largely female-centred readings from critics through the representation of strong female characters in her works. *Changes* is read as a feminist novel that demonstrates how the modern African woman is engaging in discourses and activities formerly unavailable to her. See Contemporary Portrayals of Women by Women: Comparing India and Ghana" (2012) by Florence D'Souza and "Modern Women in Aidoo's *Changes: A Love Story* Esi and Opokuya" (2018) by R. Jothi Rathinabai. Similarly, Iniobong I. Uko, in "Womanhood, Sexuality, And Work: The Dialectic of Exploitation (Flora Nwapa, Nawal El Saadawi, And Ama Ata Aidoo)", examines the concept of womanhood and how women participate in their own victimization.

[7] Sally McWilliams, 'Strange as it may seem: African Feminism in Two Novels by Ama Ata Aidoo', in *Emerging Perspectives on Ama Ata Aidoo*, ed. Ada Uzoamaka Azodo and Gay Wilentz (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1999), p. 335.

[8]Pauline Uwakweh, 'Debunking Patriarchy: The Liberational Quality of Voicing in Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions', *Research in African Literatures* 17.1 (1995), 75-84 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3820089> [accessed o3 August 2017]. Similarly, Nfah-Abbenyi highlights how the book is simultaneously a demonstration of contributions of the post-colonial woman to her own colonisation and of the social and historical capital available for her empowerment. See, Juliana Makuchi Nfah-Abbenyi, 'Introduction', in *Gender in African Women's Writing: Identity, Sexuality, and Difference* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), p. 4.

[9] See, Teiko, 'Changing Conceptions', p. 329-57. See also, Theresah P. Ennin, 'Aidoo's Men: Subverting Traditional Masculinity in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes: A Love Story*', *West Africa Review*, 20 (2012), 55–68 <Aidooâ€™s Men: Subverting Traditional Masculinity in Ama Ata Aidooâ€™s Changes: A Love Story | Ennin | West Africa Review (africaknowledgeproject.org)> [accessed 18 July 2017].

neglected to mention Aidoo's portrayal of the effects of the discrepancy between patriarchy and modernity. Therefore, I hope to draw more attention to the novel's treatment of modern Ghanaian masculinity in relation to the patriarchy in contemporary Ghana. From a masculinity studies perspective, I aim to illuminate the complexities of masculine experience in Aidoo's *Changes*, which has been traditionally focused on the feminine experience. Along with feminism, this chapter stands as a critique of the prevalence of patriarchal values in modern Ghana, revealing their incompatibility with changes in male-female relations, gender roles, and marriage. Moreover, both Ennin and Teiko have predominantly focused on the themes tackled in Aidoo's novel and not on its distinctive poetics. I argue that the study of masculinity in *Changes* would benefit significantly from exploring literary strategies aimed at depicting fictional representations of Ghanaian men in crisis.

This chapter argues that Aidoo's *Changes* presents a crisis of masculinity in modern Ghana, hinging on the inability of patriarchal values to shift and cope with modernity. The crisis is articulated across the novel through different strategic literary devices. These literary devices allow the reader to see the intensity of Oko's crisis, the breakdown of his psyche, and the fracturing of his self. Aidoo illuminates Oko's psychological crisis and dilemma between tradition and modernity due to the incompatibility between the changing role of marriage and the subversion of hegemonic masculinity with traditional expectations. Crisis, in this novel, consists of Oko's feelings of shame and emasculation provoked by family interference and toxic homosociality. Moreover, Aidoo uses irony to foreground how Oko's shift into traditional masculinity is damaging and tragic, vehemently contesting the prevalence of patriarchal values in modern Ghana.

Changes is set in 1970s Ghana and takes place mainly in urban Accra with some reference to rural areas. The plot revolves around changes experienced by both female and male characters. Oko is presented as the only male character who attempts to embrace modernity and change in his marriage to Esi. However, Oko's subversion of masculinity in a traditional Ghanaian patriarchy provokes a crisis in his masculinity due to pressure from family and friends. As a result, Oko resorts to the use of sexual violence to assert his masculinity. However, instead of restoring his manhood, Oko's violence leads to the breakdown of his marriage through divorce.

1.Narrative Perspective and Oko's Crisis

Aidoo's deployment of narrative perspective showcases the effects of family pressures and the mockery of Oko's male peers, who appear to exhibit hegemonic masculinities, on Oko's psyche. Despite Oko's support of his wife's feminism and his endorsement of the reformulation of gender roles, the prevalence of patriarchal demands leads to anxiety and feelings of weakness and shame. Accordingly, for Aidoo, the issue of patriarchal power is a constant source of tension in marriage and an index of both masculine and feminine turmoil in Ghana. Through exposing Oko's anxieties, frustrations, and psychological turmoil, the novel presents a subtle critique of family and friends' interference in Oko's marital issues.

Hegemonic masculinity, which consists of dominance over women, and the conventional definitions of gender roles in Aidoo's *Changes* are shown to be subverted by Oko.[10] This subversion is first insinuated through the portrayal of the shift in his role

[10] There are three main male characters in the novel. However, I choose to focus on Oko as he is the one who embodies a subverted masculinity and suffers from the prevalence of patriarchal norms.

as a husband and father. The reformulation of Oko's role as provider for his family is demonstrated when he stays in his wife's bungalow. Unlike the norm of the woman living in the husband's house, Oko lives in his wife's house. Moreover, Oko earns a lesser income as a schoolteacher, whereas his wife Esi is a statistician who holds a master's degree in urban Statistics. This portrayal, I argue, reflects Aidoo's feminism.[11] As a feminist who believes in gender equality, Aidoo portrays Esi as an intimidatingly assertive woman who answers Nnu Ego's yearning for women's self-fulfilment in *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) when she asks, "God, when will you create a woman who will be fulfilled in herself, a full human being not anybody's appendage".[12] Indeed, in the "Afterword" of the novel, Tuzyline Jita Allan argues that Aidoo's works lack the "drama of victimization believed to preoccupy African women writers".[13] Rather, in *Changes,* Aidoo infuses female protagonist, Esi, with agency and a sense of individuality and identity.[14] According to Meyre Ivone Santana Da Silva, Esi "defies social convention as she defies stereotypes of a woman who must bear children to have status in her society or protect her marriage at all costs".[15] Adding to Da Silva's argument that the novel

[11] This depiction may be understood as Aidoo's endeavour to reflect on the Ghanaian woman's fundamental role in nation-building in post-colonial Ghana. During the colonial period, women were marginalised, and their labour was valued as less than that of men. Moreover, women who had held important public positions in the pre-colonial period were side-lined. Following independence, a theme of African womanhood became central to the political agenda of Ghana's first president, Kwame Nkrumah, who led the Convention People's Party (CPP) until his government was overthrown in 1966. Similarly, Aidoo aims to highlight women's participation in Ghana's development through their increasing education and labour force contribution. In this process, Aidoo reverses the status quo, in which the is no longer dependent on a husband's earnings, indicating a change in Ghanaian gender roles.

[12] Emecheta, Emecheta, Buchi, *The Joys of Motherhood* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1994), p. 186.

[13] Tuzyline Jita Allan, 'Afterword', in Ama Ata Aidoo, *Changes: A Love Story* (New York: Feminist Press, 1993), p. 185.

[14] In *Changes,* the city is portrayed as a site that offers possibilities for women to create new arrangements. In diverse literary traditions, the city functions as a trope connoting freedom. As a necessary background and opposition to the city, the countryside and village are written with a great deal of nostalgia and come to stand for lost innocence, tradition, and a more people-oriented way of life. Literary representations of women in an urban environment often function symbolically as lost innocence; the pure daughter and mother of the village is reduced to a prostitute. However, in *Changes,* the urban environment is central because it represents, perhaps paradoxically, the possibilities of a different "moral and affective universe". Laura Kipnis, 'Adultery', *Critical Inquiry* 24 (1998), p.296. Indeed, the novel suggests that modern Ghana saw a marked change in the life of women by introducing them to urban life.

[15] Meyre Ivone Santana Da Silva, 'Narratives of Desire: Gender And Sexuality In Bugul, Aidoo and Chiziane', (doctoral thesis, University of Oregon, 2013), p. 60.

complicates feminism and women's rights, I also argue that the novel complicates post-colonial Ghanaian masculinity and provides opportunities for the examination of issues such as male authority, sexuality, fatherhood, and polygamy. As such, the novel depicts the reformulation of both traditional Ghanaian femininity and masculinity, as is the case with Oko and Esi.

Furthermore, by drawing attention to Oko's rejection of polygamy, the novel echoes his approval of the shifts that took place in marriage and family structure in 1980s Ghana. Since its independence in 1957, Ghana, a former British colony, has undergone many changes, politically, economically, and socially. Jean and John Comaroff, in the introduction to *Modernity and Its Malcontents* (1993), suggest that there is a tendency among Eurocentric scholars to believe that colonised societies are reconstructed in the European image. However, colonised populations "struggled in diverse ways and with differing degrees of success, to deploy, deform, and defuse imperial institutions".[16] In this sense, modernity in Africa involves the fusion of local and global, which cannot be understood by applying simplistic binaries such as the modern versus traditional or West/Other. As the novel indicates, these adjustments are much more complex and include the re-configuration of marriage and family in the modern urban Accra. This change can be understood because of colonial education, which had brought forward a new system of monogamous marriages. This reformulation may be discerned in *Changes* through Aidoo's portrayal of Oko's perspective and favouring of a monogamous marriage to the female protagonist. The reformulation is demonstrated through Oko's refusal to revert to traditional versions of Ghanaian masculinity and succumb to the pressure from his family to have other children outside of the matrimonial home: "the

[16] Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, eds, 'Introduction', in *Modernity and Its Malcontents: Ritual and Power in Postcolonial Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. xi-xii.

idea hadn't appealed to him at all. In fact, for a long time, the thought of sleeping with anyone other than Esi has left him quite cold, no matter how brightly the sun was shining, or how hot the day was" (8). This citation highlights Oko's lack of interest in polygamy and illustrates his genuine love for his wife, Esi. Unlike Oko, male character Ali Kodney, as depicted in the novel, defends polygamy as part of his African identity, pointing out that the practice has always existed in Africa and that the repudiation of this custom is nothing more than the acceptance of the standard imposed by the colonisers. In this regard, Kodney's maintenance of polygamy is a way of defying Western colonisation and the interference of Western values in Africa: "In Muslim Africa. In non-Muslim Africa. And in our marriages a man has a choice – to have one or more wives" (90). In this essence, Oko's rejection of polygamy and preference for monogamy may be interpreted as an adaptation to the social changes in 1980s Ghana.

In addition to monogamy, the meaning of sexuality and reproduction within marriage are shown to have been reformulated. Traditional Ghanaian hegemonic masculinity is characterised by virility, control of females, and a focus on reproductive heterosexuality. The category of femininity, symbolised by Esi, is accompanied by a shift from the submissive "good woman" to the defiant wife.[17] The "good wife" is someone whose subjectivity is identified with male pleasure, housework, and reproduction. Nevertheless, Aidoo depicts Esi's sexual autonomy against the common-sense knowledge that the essence of marriage is sexual fulfilment as determined by the husband. As such, although Oko does not display hegemonic traits, Esi claims that he is too

[17] The novel presents the preoccupation of African female writers and their role in redefining African womanhood, different from what was portrayed by male writers, who dominated the literary scene in Africa. See Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958); their depiction is typical in the stereotype of an oppressed and subjugated wife who has little, if any, say in shaping her destiny or changing the system that deprives and oppresses her. It is this portrayal that Aidoo's *Changes* attempts to respond to through creating assertive female characters. See also Carole Boyce Davies, 'Maidens, Mistresses and Matrons: Feminine Images in Selected Soyinka Works', in *Ngambika: Studies of Women in African Literature,* ed. by Davies, Carole Boyce, and Anne Adams Graves (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1986), pp. 75-88.

demanding of her time. The narrative comments on modern women through Oko's questioning of Esi's African identity as a woman, asking the following: "Is Esi too an African woman? She not only is but there are plenty of them around these days … these days… these days" (8). The use of the term "plenty" suggests that Esi is not the only one, but it can be understood as an outcome of modernity through the repetition of "these days". In this respect, the meaning of sexuality, based on the needs of the husband, is shown to be altered in modern Ghana.

Aidoo showcases that this social transformation in femininity, marriage, gender roles, and sexuality have led to the destabilisation of traditional images of masculinity as a source of power and agency. According to the novel, radical changes in women's education and employment foster a similar subversion of masculinity. This subversion leads one to ask whether Oko is an African man too, calling to mind Connell and Messerschmidt's consideration of masculinity's configurations of practices found in social action. According to these authors, masculinity may differ according to gender relations obtained in a particular social setting.[18] Oko's position and qualities are presented as, in various ways, inimical to the performance and reproduction of hegemonic masculinities founded on male control of, and power over, the female subject in heterosexual relationships.

However, Oko supports the ongoing alterations, insinuating an aspiration for gender equality and a change in the marital order. Esi's professionalism, competence, and authority, while contravening models of domesticated, passive femininity, are, in many ways, embraced by Oko. As Esi points out, in a discussion with her friend Opokuya, the following: "when we first met, Oko told me that what had attracted him most about me was my air of independence" (45). This attitude is significant. Although working in the

[18] Connell, 'Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept', p. 18.

public sphere and eschewing marriage and children in favour of autonomy and self-determination pose problems for Oko's masculinity, the narrator recounts that Oko values Esi's work. He "knew she was very much respected by her colleagues and other people who knew the work she did. So, she should not really be trying to impress" (8). This passage implies Oko's endorsement of new values alien to those of traditional patriarchal norms in Ghana. Oko exemplifies what Robert Morrell refers to as the 'New Man' in Africa. According to Morrell, this "New Man" is a brand of "men who do not subscribe to stereotyped ideas such as that all women are nags, that women's place is in the home, or that women should look nice but say little".[19] In other words, this category of men rejects the subordination of women and is committed to and passionate about gender equality in marriage. These men are also described as pro-feminists because they are in favour of women's emancipation, for example, by supporting women in their desire to pursue their education or advance their careers. This model aligns with Oko's masculinity, who represents this kind of man and forms a sharp contrast to dominant hegemonic masculinities depicted in the novel.[20]

By drawing attention to Oko's vulnerability, the novel condemns both family interference and male dominance over other men. What is problematic is that Oko is challenged by a society still subject to a strict conception of traditional Ghanaian manhood. The shift in social, political, and economic factors in modern Ghana has been shown to enhance gender equality. However, the development of the alternative gendered identities imagined in *Changes* is thwarted by prevailing patriarchal mores. As Comaroff and Comaroff suggest, modernity "seems to have bred a heightened concern with

[19] *Changing Men in Southern Africa* ed.by Robert Morell (London: Zed Books, 2001), p. 4.

[20] The "New Man," as Mutunda points out, is a characterisation that should not be viewed as a feminisation of the masculine, but rather as an ideal to emulate. In contrast to Oko, both male characters Ali and Kubi are depicted as dominant in their heterosexual relationships with their wives. Moreover, as the novel depicts, the fact that there is no pressure from their families and friends suggests that they have internalised patriarchal ideals of masculinity.

'tradition'; 'culture'".[21] According to the novel, male circumstances have not changed significant because of modernity. This lack of flexibility is apparent when both Oko's family and friends condemn his subverted masculinity and attitudes toward modernity and change. These characters also attempt to manipulate Oko through their constant impositions of polygamy and laughter**;** pressure he receives does not elevate his agony but intensifies it. In this regard, Aidoo vehemently criticises family and friends' intrusion in marital affairs.

The novel shows that family intervention in marital issues is problematic. I begin this discussion with family interference as it is more pre-dominant in the novel than homosociality. While Oko's female relatives, namely mother, aunts, and sisters, hold rigid patriarchal codes, Oko embraces a fluid masculine construction that seems too complex to suit masculine expectations from a hegemonic patriarchal society.[22] Therefore, these women play a major role in Oko's turmoil: "the fact that his mother and his sisters were always complaining to him about the unsafety of having an only child only made him, feel worse" (8). The free indirect discourse in this quote is salient; it reveals the thoughts of Oko and uncovers his agony caused by Esi's unwillingness to have more children, his family's claims, and his rejection of polygamy or adulterous relationships. Furthermore, this citation demonstrates that Oko is already aware of the unsafety of his situation.[23] The narrator's reference to the 'only child' stands as a symbol for inadequacy and Oko's fragile status in the marriage. Additionally, Oko is the only son, a point that seems to compound Oko's self-perception of failure. Novelists use free indirect discourse because it allows the text to delve into the mind of the narrator. By voicing Oko's internal feelings, Aidoo provides an insight into the complex nature of Ghanaian

[21] Comaroff, *Modernity and Its Malcontents*, p. xiv.
[22] Through Oko and other male characters scrutinised under this study, we come to understand that masculinity is defined as a series of shifting and fluid subject rather than a fixed and static one.
[23]Like Nwapa in *Idu*, Aidoo in *Changes* underlines the importance attached to male procreation.

masculinity in the 1980s by consciously subverting and introducing a liberating sexual environment, which offers a look into onto the changing marital landscape of masculinity. While Oko resorts to negotiating peacefully and give his relationship with Esi another chance, his family considers that he embraces passivity and subordination. Oko's family's complaints stand as a reminder that having one child is a "terrible mistake" and "dangerous situation" (39). Oko's worry and anxiety appear to be more profound with family intrusion. The use of the term 'worse' captures the sense of its intensity. Therefore, the narrative ironically, points to Oko's family lack of awareness about their actual 'terrible mistake' and the 'dangerous situation' that Oko is put in because of their consistent complaints. The female figures have a symbolic meaning in revealing how Ghanaian power structures that prop 'traditional' expression of manhood do not inhibit the creation of newer forms of manhood in the family unit. Thus, these characters function as agents of socialisation as they influence male subjectivity creation. Not living up to their expectations is but another potent pressure exerted on the character under scrutiny.

In addition to procreation, Aidoo, ironically, criticises the view that Oko's spending money on his nuclear family is a failure. Oko's sisters "used to come and insinuate that their brother was failing in his duties to the family because she [Esi] had turned his head with 'something'" (39). The failure that the sisters refer to consists of Oko's spending his money on his nuclear family while neglecting his mother and sisters. This perspective suggests that Oko's failure in his duties undermines his manhood. Moreover, Oko is seen to be wasting money on Esi: "as far as the sisters were concerned, Oko never had money to spend on them because he was busy wasting his salary on her" (39). Aidoo's criticism of Oko's sisters may be detected through their ignorance that Esi earns more than their brother. When these characters are informed that Esi earns more than Oko, their new awareness serves only to underscore ironies embedded in their

thinking. Ironically, this awareness does not make them change their perspective: "their new line of attack was that it served him right, marrying a woman who had more money than him. His wife could never respect him" (39). In both cases, these characters view Esi as a 'dangerous' woman; what seems to matter to them is sharing their brother's income. With the described situation, the novel establishes a critical commentary on family interference.

The continual insistence from Oko's family members can be interpreted not only as a reminder of his current situation, but also as a reason for Oko to accept polygamy. While Oko remains calm, his mother and sisters continue to put pressure on him to react. Polygamy is shown to be prevalent in modern Ghana and considered one of the solutions suggested to Oko to produce more children. According to Oko's family, marrying a 'good woman' will enable him to restore his manhood: "It was also around this time that the hints began to drop here and there: about the need for him to get himself an unspoilt young woman, properly brought up, whose eyes have not jumped over her eyebrows with too much education and too much money of her own" (39). Based on this passage, it may be understood that the subversion of traditional masculinity and femininity is viewed by Oko's family as a disruption of the patriarchal social order. Mensah Adinkrah examines the cultural constructions of masculinity and femininity in contemporary Ghanaian society and the corresponding behavioural prescriptions, arguing that Ghanaian societies continue to subscribe to patriarchal features (of marriage) that set out expected gender roles. For example, society frowns on men's exhibiting behavioural traits associated with women, and vice versa.[24] Similarly, in the novel, it is the female figures, not Oko, who have themselves internalised patriarchal norms and are doing their best to maintain them.

[24] Mensah Adinkrah, 'Better Dead than Dishonoured: Masculinity and Male Suicidal Behaviour in Contemporary Ghana', *Social Science & Medicine* 74.4 (2012), p. 474 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2010.10.011>

Aidoo, here, aims to show that women might not only be oppressed by men, but by women themselves due to several factors. Among these, jealousy seems to be a major factor behind Oko's sisters' and mother's pressures. Moreover, these female figures exhibit a strong desire to take control over Oko's household and money. Consequently, the female characters tormenting Oko mentally serves as a mechanism to provoke his reactions. Such narrative insight could be seen as a call to dismantle rigid and limiting gender norms in favour of more fluid, less stringent models of gendered behaviour.

Homosociality, or male friendship, which is portrayed as essential for Oko, is revealed to be toxic. Before turning the focus towards the impact of homosociality on Oko's masculinity, it is necessary to briefly discuss the notion of homosociality.[25] The term was initially used by sociologists and the term's use in sociology mainly stems from the work of Jean Lipman-Blumen, who discusses homosociality in *Toward a Homosocial Theory of Sex Roles* (1976).[26] For Lipman-Blumen, 'homosocial' is defined as "the seeking, enjoyment, and/or preference for the company of the same sex. The concept is distinguished from "homosexual" in that it does not involve necessarily […] an explicitly erotic sexual interaction between members of the same sex".[27] While Lipman-Blumen's work has been well, if not uncritically, received within its own discipline, it is the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick on homosociality that has been most influential in literary and cultural studies. In the opening to her seminal monograph, "Between Men: English

[25] For a discussion of the introduction to the term 'homosociality' and the corresponding concept into critical discourse, see Merl Storr, *Latex and Lingerie: Shopping for Pleasure at Ann Summers Parties* (Oxford and New York, 2003), 39-46.
[26] Jean Lipman-Blumen, 'Toward a Homosocial Theory of Sex Roles An Explanation of the Sex Segregation of Social Institutions', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 1.3 (1976) 15-31 <Toward a Homosocial Theory of Sex Roles: An Explanation of the Sex Segregation of Social Institutions | Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society: Vol 1, No 3, Part 2 (uchicago.edu)> [accessed 14 January 2022]
[27] Ibid., p. 16.

Literature and Male Homosocial Desire" (1985), Sedgwick provides a definition of her conceptualization of male homosocial desire:

> 'Male homosocial desire': the phrase in the title of this study is intended to mark both discriminations and paradoxes. 'Homosocial desire,' to begin with is a kind of oxymoron. 'Homosocial' is a word occasionally used in history and the social sciences, where it describes social bonds between persons of the same sex; it is a neologism, obviously formed by analogy with 'homosexual,' and just as obviously distinguished from 'homosexual'.[28]

Similarly, *Changes* emphasises the importance of homosocial interpersonal relations. The issue that Oko is unable to fulfil his role is not limited to his family but has been made public knowledge. Therefore, Oko is constantly manipulated by those who question his manhood. This questioning is evident when Oko tells Esi about his friends' mockery: '"my friends are laughing at me … they think I'm not behaving like a man'" (8). While his family complains to him, Oko is mocked by his companions due to his failure. The laughter functions as a sign of derision. Negative attitudes to Oko's masculinity, whether conscious or unconscious, are reflected in his friends' laughter. These can be interpreted as a way of undermining one's masculinity. Homosocial masculinity, here, functions collaboratively to shame Oko, who has failed to live up to the expectations of Ghanaian

[28] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York, 1985), p. 1.

masculinity. The phrase, behaving like a man, as used here, symbolises a traditional pattern of male dominance to which Oko does not adhere. The deployment of sexuality and desire as a cornerstone in marking domination from subordinated masculinity demonstrates the centrality of sexuality in the construction of masculinity. Oko's sexual failure is seen to stimulate his friends' laughter and mockery in the same way as Amarajeme's sterility and Ousmane's subversion of gender roles do. Similar to these male characters, who are viewed as failed men, laughter serves to ostracise Oko for having unsuccessful sexual relations with Esi.

This kind of laughter serves as a reminder of the social, moral, and aesthetic standards of traditional Ghanian society. Laughter in the novel can be viewed as a result of what Marry Jane Androne refers to as "the growing pains that accompany […] reconfigured marriage and familiar structures".[29] This pain can be discerned in the novel through laughter, which is portrayed as a response to perceived deficiencies in the proper performance of masculinity; indeed, this laughter is clearly directed at those who are thought to fail to live up to the ideal demands of masculinity like Oko. Laughter operates to question a subject's claim to masculinity and has as its object a person regarded as somehow inferior.[30] In doing so, I argue that laughter functions as a social corrective (negatively in this case) and means of maintaining patriarchal standards and values.

Though laughter serves as a mockery against subordinated masculinities, dominant masculinities may also be viewed as asserting their own claim to superiority. This policing of masculinities both relies on and simultaneously produces a hierarchy of masculinity, of which men strive to be at the apex. This policing can lead to violent

[29] Mary Jane Androne, 'Nervous Masculinities: Male Characters in Ama Ata Aidoo's Changes', in *Essays in Honour of Ama Ata Aidoo at 70: A Reader in African Cultural Studies*, ed. Anne V. Adams (Banbury: Ayebia Clarke, 2012), p. 149.

[30] In this novel, the laughter could, in effect, not only police Oko's gender performance, but also encourage him to conform to the accepted norms of masculinity. As will be seen later in this chapter, response is given to the laughter in the marital rape scene.

clashes between men as they continually strive for supremacy. The novel does not indicate that violence is the outcome, but one important feature to note is the effective inevitability of homosociality and its deteriorating effects. As such, homosociality, in this context, is found to be toxic.

The novel questions the use of laughter as a mechanism to humiliate Oko by drawing attention to his mental turmoil. The constant threat of being judged for not having lived up to the dictates of the masculine ideal demonstrates that Oko is vulnerable. Oko's emotional instability is evident through his avowal of weakness and fear of Esi in the earlier quote. Here, the novel draws attention to the way in which masculinities negatively influence and are implicated in the interactions between men. Like his mother and sisters, Oko's friends can manipulate his sense of masculinity by laughing at him. That his friends laugh at him emphasises the judgment that accrues to the man who fails in his masculine duties.

Aidoo reveals that this kind of homosociality is damaging, harmful, and too powerful to be resisted by exposing the detrimental effects of such judgment on Oko's psyche. In preparation for the admission of powerlessness, Oko imagines different voices talking to him. The unidentified voices are another instance of Aidoo's use of a character's interior monologue to illustrate the power of fiction in discerning internal turmoil, dilemma, and confusion:

> 'It's not safe to show a woman that you love her … not too much anyway', some male voice was telling him. But whose voice was that? His father's? his Uncle Amoa's? he wasn't sure that the voice belonged to any of those two. Of course, those men and their kind hid their hearts very well. They were brought up to know how. On the other hand, they were also brought up too well to go

> around saying anything crude. No, it must have been one of his friends from boarding school days. They were always saying things of that sort. 'Showing a woman you love her is like asking her to walk over you. How much of your love for how heavy her kicks'. And were they wrong? Look at Esi. Two solid years of courtship, six years of marriage. And what had he got out of it? Little. Nothing. No affection. Not even plain warmth. Nothing except one little daughter! (7-8)

This scene maps out the tension between Oko's power in the private sphere and the concealed anxieties that undermine his claims to confidence and sufficiency. What is interesting, however, is the ideological work that Aidoo's narrator undertakes in highlighting the sharp contrast between hegemonic masculinities, exemplified by his father, uncle, and his friends, and that of Oko. In the above passage, which appears right before the account of a dialogue between Oko and Esi, the subtle shift from the anonymous voices to that of Oko does not validate their hegemonic viewpoints, serving only to stress Oko's anxiety and vulnerability. Thus, Aidoo reflects the various voices that haunt Oko's consciousness, indicates that established notions of acceptable masculinity create a set of virulent pressures on Oko. Humiliation is depicted as a side effect of the strain of not living up to preconceived image of what constitutes being a man in Ghana.

Oko is not only judged by others, but also seen to have internalised the rules of idealised masculinity through self-reflection. The\ rules that Oko's friends use to judge each other, constituting the bounds of a model of hegemonic masculinity, are not only used to police the actions and appearance of other men, but also internalised by Oko. It is

apparent that Aidoo employs a direct monologue to signal Oko's awareness of his masculine failure, of not living up to the expectations of his Ghanaian society. However, unlike laughter, the direct monologue is a self-reflexive process. Oko shows clear concern over his ability to live up to the ideal of masculinity, which is nowhere more poignant than in his discussion with Esi, in which he questions his own masculine identity by expressing his feeling of shame and embarrassment.[31] Indeed, as Sedgwick and Frank note, "unlike contempt or disgust, shame is characterised by its failure ever to renounce its object cathexis, its relation to the desire for pleasure as well as the need to avoid pain".[32] Therefore, masculinity cannot be separated from Oko's subjectivity as it is central to its formation. The feeling of shame indicates a problematic relationship with masculinity. Oko is shown to apply the dictates of traditional Ghanaian masculinity to himself, leading to nervousness over his gender performance.

I argue that Oko's admission of weakness is an outcome of the dilemmas and continuous pressure from family and friends. Oko explicitly invokes the fragility of his masculinity, and his avowal is an index of his self-acknowledgement that his actions have failed to live up to societal expectations. Oko's bewilderment is expressed through his "thinking about how much he had invested in the marriage with Esi, and how much he had fought to keep it going made him feel a little *angry* and a little *embarrassed*. With all that going on in his head, his penis, which had by then become big and hard, almost collapsed. But since his eyes were still on Esi's navel, the thing jerked itself up again" (7). The jerking and collapse of Oko's penis in this scene may signify not one single emotion, but instead multiple intense emotions in flux. Indeed, the text itself provides no key for a precise, unitary interpretation of Oko's feelings, but instead seems to revel in

[31] See Theodate, L. Smith, 'Notes on the Psychology of Emotion', The American Journal of Psychology 26.2 (1915), 229-235 <https://doi.org/10.2307/1413252>.
[32] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and Adam Frank, *Touching Feeling: Pedagogy, Performativity, Affect* (Durham, NC, and London, 2003), p. 117.

plurality, symbolizing perplexity. Oko has demonstrably failed to live up to the ideals of masculinity, and his negotiations may be understood as an aspiration to avoid scenarios in which he might be reminded of his failure. As such, Oko finds himself entangled in a constant battle of becoming what Ghanaian society thinks he should be. On the other hand, if he chooses not to engage in complicity, Oko must deal with the shame of being 'less of a man', endless complains from his family, and his peers' laughter.

The tone of the narrative while portraying Oko's dependence on his wife's submission is full of pity. Oko is described as somebody who speaks without confidence even when he must talk about what concerns his own life. This lack of confidence is captured in his plea for considering his anguish when he asks, '"Aren't you saying anything?' Oko's voice was full of pleading" (9). His 'pleading' here should instead be seen as purely psychological; perhaps, it arises from a sense of bewilderment, dilemma, and the need to find solutions different from what has been suggested by his family. This glimpse into Oko's inner thoughts allows the reader to appreciate the burden of hegemonic masculinity and the self-reflexive judgment that it produces. Oko must depend on Esi's submission to restore his manhood.

Moreover, I contend that Oko not solely seeks Esi's pity, but also attempts to negotiate with her to save his marriage. This entanglement of admission of weakness and of love and desire characterises Oko's compromises with Esi, who remains uninterested in his proposals for much of the novel. That Oko seeks pity reveals that he does not want to become aggressive and hegemonic. This is evident when Oko has previously resorted to peaceful negotiations with Esi in order to find a solution for their conflicts. Moreover, Oko's decision to keep his extended family out of his marital issues demonstrates his love and attachment to Esi.

By exposing Oko's vulnerability due to his embracing change and gender equality, the novel explores multiple facets of the paralysing effects of hegemonic masculinity in modern Ghana. As discussed throughout this section, within a society still subject to a strict conception of traditional Ghanaian manhood, Oko finds himself in a critical situation. I have argued that the novel showcases that the configuration of Ghanaian masculinity is inconsistent with the prevalence of traditional beliefs and gender roles, a fact that provokes multiple forms of affliction. The novel demonstrates that family interference intensifies Oko's agony instead of relieving it. Laughter is also shown to be harmful, whereas homosociality is inevitable. This section has demonstrated that the Ghanaian patriarchal order ultimately proves to be detrimental to Oko's happiness. Like Ousmane in *Scarlet Song*, Oko is presented as unable to overthrow feelings of shame and emasculation. Therefore, he moves to more traditional arrangements. However, through irony, the novel proves that shifting to hegemonic masculinity complicates Oko's marital life with Esi and leads to its breakdown. As such, Aidoo deflates the commanding image of hegemony, exposing instead its vulnerabilities and frailties, as is discussed in the next section.

2.Irony: Reinstating Manhood and Feminism

Through irony, Oko's shift to hegemonic masculinity is condemned. The novel offers a straightforward narrative of Oko's failed attempt to assert his manhood through sexual vioelnce due to Esi's feminism. Oko is challenged by Esi when she breaks up her monogamous marriage and divorces him after marital rape.[33] Da Silva considers Esi not

[33] In *Changes*, Esi coins the term "marital rape" to refer to her husband's sexual abuse.

only a feminist, but also a "capitalist and an individualist".[34] At this stage, hegemonic masculinity takes on a different meaning. Oko is no longer an emasculated man affected by his friends' hegemonic masculinities, but dominant and hegemonic himself. Sexual violence seems to be used by Oko for the purpose of avoiding being ridiculed further for being less than a man. This violence is also considered an act that expresses Oko's unspoken emotions and intentions; with this act, he expects to restore his masculine dominance in the household and save his marriage. Instead of avoiding embarrassment, irony exposes that the use of sexual violence leads to the destruction of his marriage to Esi and a feeling of loss.

Firstly, resorting to the use of violence may be understood as Oko's longing for reinstating his manhood. The novel recounts Oko's attempt of recovering manhood through violence after several peaceful negotiations with Esi. The scene occurs in the morning when Esi is getting ready for work. However, this morning is portrayed as "very particular" (6). Its particularity is violence, which seems to differentiate it from other usual mornings. In the novel, the violent sexual scene is referred by Oko and Esi as "that morning". Juliana Makuchi Nfah-Abbenyi claims that, though there is not a specific term in any Akan language for marital rape, by referring to the episode as "that morning," both Esi and Oko agree that something unusual happened. Although Esi is unable to name what happened in her native language, "her experience is inferred, is named in codes that are available in a heteroglossia that is culturally specific, culturally translatable to both Esi and Oko".[35] The violent scene is described in detail by the narrator in the following passage:

[34] Da Silva, 'Narratives of Desire', p. 62.
[35] Nfah-Abbenyi, *Gender in African Women's Writing*, p. 292.

> Oko flung the bed cloth away from him, sat up, pulled her down, and moved on her. Esi started to protest. But he went on doing what he had determined to do all morning. He squeezed her breast repeatedly, thrust his tongue into her mouth, forced her unwilling legs apart, entered her, plunging in and out of her, thrashing to the left, to the right, pounding and just pounding away (9).

What is noteworthy in this case is the emphasis on narrating Oko's actions. This incident may be viewed as driven by his need to prove himself to his wife, family, and friends. By illustrating, in the starkest of terms, the negotiation(s) required to 'be a man' following Ghanaian socially sanctioned lines, Aidoo underlines the unstable nature of masculinity along with its propensity for constant mutation. It is particularly fitting, then, that this episode functions to reflect the wider theme of Oko's troubled masculinity and the volume of emotions that go unspoken. Oko's attempt to conform to the established gender order, therefore, depicts him as a fragile and vulnerable man who sees his status as a man as wholly reliant on performing widely accepted expressions of masculinity.

While critics have condemned Oko's action, I suggest that it is his emotional turmoil provoked by shame that triggers his violent reaction. That the marital rape occurs after the admission of weakness and rejected pleading is significant. The violence may be understood as an implication of Esi's refusal to understand or acknowledge in his previous negotiations and pleading. All of Oko's emotions appear to be expressed through acts that require no words to add: "For some time neither of them spoke. There was nothing else he wanted to say" (9). Michael Lewis suggests that shame, because of its unpleasantness, causes subjects to want to purge themselves of it. As he notes, "because of the intensity of this emotional state, the global attack on the self-system, all that

individuals can do when presented with such a state is to attempt to rid themselves of it".[36] This response can be discerned in the novel as an attempt to alleviate the unpleasant emotions that Oko experiences. In addition, the novel puts greater emphasis on Oko's vulnerability by exposing agony than on his sexual desire. Thus, I disagree with Da Silva that Esi is considered by Oko "an empty vessel, an object of her husband's sexual desire, Esi's own sexual desires cannot be taken into consideration. Esi is expected to follow the patriarchal rules and be fulfilled simply by arousing male desire" (73). Oko's desire for Esi is based on love rather than objectification, and his refusal to accept any sexual relation with women other than Esi indicates his affection and faithfulness to Esi. As Esi is expected to perform according to traditional feminine expectations, Oko is suffering from any deviation. Not having sexual intercourse with his wife is one of the deviations that lead Oko's family and male peers to interfere. Though I do not excuse male abuse against women, I consider the feeling of shame as providing motivation for Oko's violent reaction. For a moment, Oko's sexual act is shown to restore his confidence as a man. The narrator explains this restoration metaphorically:

> Esi's anger rose to an exploding pitch. Not just because Oko taking the cloth left her completely naked, or because she was feeling uncomfortably wet between her thighs. What really finished her was her eyes catching sight of the cloth trailing behind Oko who looked like some arrogant king, as he opened the door to get to the bathroom before her. She sucked her teeth, or made the noise, which is normally described, inadequately, in English as a sucking of the teeth. It was thin, but loud, and very long. In a contest with any of the fishwives about ten

[36] Michael Lewis, 'Self-Conscious Emotions: Embarrassment, Pride, Shame, and Guilt', in *Handbook of Emotions*, 3rd ed, ed. by Michael Lewis, Jeannette M. Haviland-Jones, and Lisa Feldman Barrett (New York, 2008), p. 748.

> kilometres down the road from the Hotel Twentieth Century, she would have won (10).

The use of the simile, "Oko who looked like some arrogant king", is significant. The reference to the 'king' here is used to mean power, possession, and control. In addition to the use of the simile comparing Oko to 'an arrogant king', another example of expressing feelings in Aidoo's *Changes* concerns nonverbal expressions of emotion. To express Oko's inner thoughts, Aidoo uses the action of "taking the cloth" rather than verbalise the emotion of triumph and power. Similarly, the description of Esi's reaction to the unpleasant incident is pertinent as it reveals the extent of her anger and disempowerment.[37] The sucking of teeth is a sign used to express anger, irritation, and/or frustration through non-verbal expressions. The effective combination of literary techniques and language bring about a clear reflection of Oko's newfound confidence in himself.[38] The accomplishment of this apparently secure masculine identity is, therefore, premised on the emasculation or feminisation that has hitherto haunted Oko, both externally in the form of the different voices and internally in his passivity and fearfulness.

Oko's exultant reflections on his newfound masculine confidence mark his secure inscription in a binary gender order. The description Oko's feelings after the 'rape' scene mirrors his unwillingness to act violently: "he was already feeling like telling Esi that he was sorry. But he was also convinced that he mustn't" (10). This unwillingness to ask for

[37] Most critics' readings of Oko (such as Odamtten, Ennin, and Androne) in the marital rape scene with Esi are rather lopsided, with an excessively feminist inflexion of the issues at stake in the couple's marriage. See Vincent O. Odamtten, *The Art of Ama Ata Aidoo: Polylectics and Reading Against NeoColonialism* (Gainesville: up of Florida, 1994).

[38] Many critics use this scene to advocate for women's rights in love and sex in the context of marriage. I subscribe to some of these views and do not approve Oko's violent act against Esi's victimization. But I would rather argue that Oko cannot be wholly blamed for his violent reaction.

forgiveness is interpreted as one of Oko's flaws. Oko seems to believe that asking for forgiveness would ruin his new position as the dominant and patriarch. Therefore, he reminds himself that he must not admit his mistake to Esi. As Judith Butler writes:

> The articulation "I feel like a woman" by a female or "I feel like a man" by a male presupposes that in neither case is the claim meaninglessly redundant. Although it might appear unproblematic *to be* a given anatomy […], the experience of a gendered psychic disposition or cultural identity is considered an achievement. […] This achievement requires a differentiation from the opposite (91) gender. Hence one is one's gender to the extent that one is not the other gender.[39]

Oko's thoughts illuminate the fact that gender is not merely a natural effect of the sexed body; its accomplishment requires a performance that marks the body as 'masculine' rather than feminine. The incident is symptomatic of Oko's general inability to emerge from the cocoon of his upbringing and socialisation. The novel, then, yokes the concepts of hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy to one another as to suggest that the two concepts are related, if not mutually dependent.

The initial sense of weakness seems to be overcome, but the profound incompatibility between the demands of Ghanian patriarchy and Esi's feminism are unresolved. Although Oko justifies his act through love, that morning is described as a landmark in their relationship. Using simile, Aidoo compares the morning to earthquakes

[39] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 34.

and floods: “just as earthquakes and floods become landmarks in the history of nations, the morning when Oko jumped on Esi became a landmark in their relationship: referred to thereafter by both of them as ‘That Morning’” (69). Both ‘earthquakes and ‘floods’ have negative connotations as natural catastrophes; they both have destructive effects on earth. By equating this violent act to earthquakes and floods, the novel metaphorically highlights its destructive consequences on Esi, Oko, and their marriage. I suggest that hegemonic masculinity in *Changes* is self-destructive. While Oko ostensibly shifts to hegemonic masculinity, his position as patriarch is shown to be damaging, as discussed throughout this section.

The deployment of irony foregrounds that Oko’s intention to escape his subordinate position within the masculine hierarchy renders him a victim of hegemonic and ‘hypermasculine’ patterns of manhood. Among the paralysing effects of hegemonic masculinity is Oko’s feeling of regret. The sense of regret is evident in the following passage:

> Oko blamed himself for overstaying in bed. He could not stop thinking that perhaps if he had got himself up at this usual early hour, he would later have found a better way to show his determination to give their relationship another chance. It was always possible that some alternative existed which would have been more acceptable to Esi, rather than the one he had chosen which had had such unfortunate repercussions (69).

According to this passage, Oko’s confidence is momentary; it is now substituted by a deep feeling of remorse. As such, although Oko’s attempt to redefine his masculinity at

first appears successful, the use of violence against Esi is ineffective. Rather, the violence leads to his feeling of guilt. In this sense, Oko's shift to hegemonic masculinity seems to subvert his initial peaceful negotiations while reinforcing patriarchal privilege.

Ultimately, Oko's temporary restoration of his confidence is challenged by Esi's feminism. Oko's view of himself as a patriarch renders the irony not only more sombre but also more complex since we can see it as directed against Esi's feminism. Although Esi and Oko both refer to the violent act as 'the assault', Esi secretly reminds herself that it was 'rape', reflecting her knowledge of her rights. The narrator describes the incident with the use of personification, with 'her unwilling legs' reflecting the fact that Esi has an insight into a situation and the ability to determine freely which one to belong to or accept as right and what to reject as wrong. The narrative voice establishes the strength of Esi that may break a traditional pattern of dominance, which is shown through the way she frees herself, thereby rejecting the miserable fate of her mothers and grandmothers, who were silent and were consequently devastated by an exploitative system. The awareness of what her foremothers experienced animates her labelling of the event as 'rape'. This nomination explains again that Esi symbolises the modern woman whose awareness does not tolerate acts of violence that used to subjugate African women. Despite Oko's attempts to save his marriage, peacefully and violently, Esi "snubbed all his attempts to get her to see how his promotion would add some new advantages, and even glamour to their lives" (70). Thus, Oko's domination of Esi has only temporarily satisfied his urge to demonstrate his manhood.

Symbolically, Esi is used here to support one of the pillars of feminism that aims to reject violence committed against women. An assertive woman is that woman with formal education; this kind of formal education is combined with a mind that, when exposed to levels of oppression, refuses to be submerged. Esi's feminism is illustrated

through her imagination of a conference's presentation, in which she advocates for women's rights, defends their subjugation, and questions how an audience would respond to her about the concept of marital rape. When Oko forces a sexual relationship on her, Esi describes it with a term non-existent in her native language to conceptualise male abuse. Esi's inner voice is reflected in the following passage:

> Marital rape. Suddenly, she could see herself or some other woman sociologist presenting a paper on: 'the prevalence of marital rape in the Urban African environment' to a packed audience of academics. Overwhelmingly male ... a few women. As the presentation progresses, there are boos from the men, and uncomfortable titters from the women. At the end of it, there is predictable hostile outrage. 'Yes, we told you, didn't we? What is burying us now are all these imported feminists' ideas' (11).

According to Esi's imagination, marital rape is rife, and she is not the only victim; a lot of women are subject to sexual abuse by their husbands. Furthermore, the phrase, 'Urban African environment', as used here, symbolises a traditional pattern of male dominance that is not particular to Ghana, but instead a characteristic of the African continent. The particular reference to 'urban' might be indicative of the different interpretations of marital rape between a rural and urban environment. It might be understood that women in African cities are more educated and aware of their rights compared to the ones in rural settings. Therefore, a research paper on marital rape in African cities, in which the participants have awareness about sexual abuse in marriage and have the ability to understand the term, brings more insights on the topic. What is for Esi is explaining the

abuse as marital rape. The fact that the term 'marital rape' cannot be translated into any African language suggests that sex is something that a husband has the right to claim from his wife any time. Moreover, that both men and women show discomfort implies that talking about sexual violence is an avoidable taboo topic. Therefore, the passage shows that, even though the audience is from the elite, feminism is viewed as something alien to Africa, a transplanting of Western ideology to independent Ghana. Therefore, Esi rejects the 'African woman', or the Mother Africa identity embraced in *Scarlet Song*, which gives Esi a new label, namely feminist.[40] In contrast to Esi, her friends believe that feeling so desirable to the point that a man feels out of control and commits an act like that may incite jealousy in other women, as is the case with her best friend Opokuya. Opokuya confesses that she is jealous of Esi because Oko seems to be a perfect loving husband. As such, Esi's accusation of "marital rape" appears to be a result of her Westernised education and influence of feminism.

Moreover, I suggest that Esi has a symbolic function of subverting and undermining hegemonic masculinity. Rather than concentrating on the personal failings of individual male characters in living up to the demands of masculinity, I aim to explore the ways in which female characters subvert and undermine the concept of hegemonic masculinity.[41] The narrator clarifies that marital rape "might have outraged her [Esi], but it not be the whole story. She was just using it" (69). This citation justifies Esi's refusal

[40] Like Aidoo's protagonist, many feminists from developing countries have been criticised with having imported a Western ideology that brings into developing nations the perspective of White middle-class women from developed countries. This issue has, in fact, generated several debates. Uma Narayan argues that Third World feminisms have nothing to do with importing feminist ideas from the developed world and transplanting them into other cultural contexts. According to her, Third World feminism "is not a mindless mimicking of 'Western agendas' in one clear and simple sense – that, for instance, Indian feminism is clearly a response to issues specifically confronting Indian women". Uma Narayan, *Dislocating Cultures/ Identities, Traditions, and Third World Feminism* (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 13.

[41] Masculinity does not exist in isolation but must be viewed in relation to other forms of gendered praxis, particularly femininities and female-sexed bodies. Although the construction and function of femininities is beyond the scope of this chapter, I hope to highlight how viewing masculinity as operating in dialogue with women and with femininity is another productive avenue of exploration.

to negotiate with Oko after several attempts. In this respect, Esi's decision to divorce Oko not solely is based on the premise of that morning but serves as a kind of feminist resistance to subjugation against women. It appears that Aidoo is suggesting that, for Esi to be liberated and fulfilled as a woman, both Oko and Esi must renounce their African identities, an issue shown to be complicated because of the inherent sexism of many traditional African societies, as evident in the novel. As a result, Esi "had carried her determination to leave Oko and even asked for a divorce" (70). The use of the verb 'carried' here reveals that Esi's intention to divorce Oko is not something new, but a continuation of her previous resolve. As such, the figure of Esi serves to offer a critique of the hegemony of masculinity.

Therefore, while Oko seemingly shifts to hegemonic masculinity, he is still seen as a problematic character. Oko's use of sexual violence is shown to be destructive. Literature can be seen to function as a space in which masculine ideals can be pushed to extremes so that their consequences are explored. Indeed, irony is used to demonstrate the irrelevance of patriarchal dominance in modern Ghana. Moreover, what should be considered also is the special feeling-quality that is attached to this irony.

Esi's decision to divorce Oko is shown to be devastating for Oko. The narrator describes Oko's confusion in the following quote: "this development had so startled him that for a day or two he had almost become disoriented and had taken to drinking a little more than usual" (70). This passage indicates that, contrary to Esi, it is Oko who expresses sorrow following the collapse of his marriage. Even drinking alcohol and becoming the head of a school do not reduce his grief: "But not even the new job could stop him from thinking about his broken marriage every now and then. He did, especially in the very late hours of the night, when he could finally leave his office and crawl home to bed. … it was the absence of that and the sense of loss he suffered in consequence that

so often assailed him mercilessly, and cruelly ruined his mornings" (71). The verb 'crawl' does not demonstrate Oko's difficulty to walk, but instead expresses actual loss and disorientation, capturing the sense of being lost. Moreover, the personification 'assailed him mercilessly and cruelly ruined his mornings' uncovers his deep suffering from regret. In this respect, both nights and mornings are the same for Oko; they both torment his consciousness.

Furthermore, even adopting an illusion is shown to be inefficient. To alleviate his agony, Oko opts for an illusion, which is apparent through Oko's refusal to accept the given situation after the divorce. Oko, instead, convinces himself that distance is what separates them "since the school was some distance away from Accra, he was able to deceive himself into thinking that Esi had not left him. That they were only separated until she could start coming out for weekends. And he missed his daughter terribly too. Deep down in the corners of his being, he could not persuade himself to accept that it was all over" (71). However, adopting an illusion is undermined; it is portrayed as an enormous deception for Oko. The distance that separates him from his wife and daughter is unable to ease his pain through illusion: "when a letter arrived from a lawyer's office asking for a divorce for Esi, he was so mad he rushed to Accra. At first, he threatened to refuse to divorce her. Then he changed his mind and talked reason" (71). Therefore, when faced with reality, a sense of shock is inevitable. Therefore, illusion is futile.

Conclusion

The persistence of patriarchy, based on power dichotomies between genders, is shown to prevent Oko from engaging in an egalitarian, healthy relationship with Esi. Significantly, Aidoo does not glorify this category of hegemonic masculinity but demonstrates its damaging effects and highlights its inherent vulnerability. It appears that Aidoo is suggesting that, to save his marriage with Esi, Oko must renounce his

African identity because of the inherent sexism of a number of traditional African societies. Or, if Oko wishes to affirm his manhood, he must conform to hegemonic ideals. Either way, Oko stands to lose; either way, he finds herself diminished. This fluctuation in masculinity consistently opens new conceptual spaces from which the reader may start to recognise the social burden of masculinity and may begin to imagine how the modern Ghanaian society, textual or otherwise, would look if it were not subject to masculinity's tyranny. Moreover, the novel stands as a call for radical revision of gender in Ghana by eliminating binaries that limit men's change and embracing of gender equality.

Chapter 5. Negotiating Pre-colonial Masculine Norms in Contemporary Nigeria in Ayobami Adebayo's *Stay With Me* (2017)

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I have discussed Aidoo's employment of narrative perspective and irony in her literary depictions of the crisis of Ghanaian masculinity in 1980s, triggered by the incompatibility of modernity with traditional Ghanaian masculinity. In this final chapter, I explore Adebayo's depiction of the mother's role in perpetuating pre-colonial notions of virility and fatherhood and its tragic outcomes on Akin's marriage and identity as a man, a son, and a husband in her debut novel *Stay With Me* (2017). This novel is narrated from the point of view of both Akin the male protagonist and Yejide the female protagonist, which differentiates it from other novels told from a third-person narrator.[1] This contemporary style of narration allows a glimpse to the thoughts of both male and female characters.

Ayobami Adebayo is a contemporary Nigerian writer. She was born in Lagos in 1988 then moved with her family to Ilesa. She obtained her BA and MA in Nigeria then she moved to London for a masters in creative writing where she was taught by the Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Margaret Atwood. Her debut novel *Stay With Me* was published in 2017, which is an extension of a short story Adebayo started writing two years before turning it into a novel. In writing *Stay With Me,* Adebayo was inspired by several factors. First of all, Adebayo mentioned her grandmother's stories and myths which can be clearly detected in her novel. In addition, Adebayo mentioned that she was influenced by African authors such as Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe,

[1] The two narratives in the novel are presented in more or less equal terms, which allows an in-depth understanding of both characters, who view the same, and sometimes define events of their lives through completely different lenses.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and Sefi Atta.[2] However, the writer who had the most impact on Adebayo is Buchi Emecheta I discussed in chapter 2 Adebayo was so fascinated by Emecheta's portrayal of sacrifice and expectations and it is something we can infer throughout *Stay With Me*. The inclusion of the sickle cell disease within the story, according to Adebayo, is based on her own observations of her friend's mother who experienced pain after the loss of her daughter.[3] Moreover, Adebayo is a writer who is obsessed by politics and fascinated by the relationship between political and private life and the shift in the way people engaged with Nigeria as citizens during political upheaval in the mid-1980s.[4] However, Adebayo sheds more light on gender expectations and domestic matters against the background of a country rife with instability.

Current criticism around *Stay With Me* is limited in terms of the discussion on depictions of masculinity. Commentary on Adebayo's novel mostly consists of book reviews and centres on the topic of marriage, fertility, motherhood, love and loss, and the possibility of redemption, whereas masculinity, especially in terms of the protagonist's societal oppression, remains yet to be explored. For example, Margaret Atwood in her favourable review of *Stay With Me* hails it as "scorching, gripping, ultimately lovely". The text is also examined by critics from the perspective of feminism. A. Benita briefly compares Adebayo's novel with Perumal Murugan's *One Part Woman* and reveals the similarities in the cogent representation of motherhood in the two different contexts.[5] While Benita has focussed on the female protagonists' quest for womanhood, she has

[2] Tayla Burney, Politics and Prose (2018). (122) Ayọ̀bámi Adébáyọ̀, "Stay With Me" - YouTube
[3] Ibid,.
[4] Nigeria in 1985 is marred by military coups and political turbulence which subtly permeates the daily lives of the characters in the novel.
[5] See A. Benita, 'Bonds and Burdens of Motherhood in Perumal Murugan's *One Part Woman* and Ayobami Adebayo's *Stay With Me*: A Comparative Study', *Literary Endeavour* IX .3 (2018) www.literaryendeavour.org [accessed 12 January 2022].

ignored the status and role of the impotent male character, which this chapter aims to explore.

This chapter argues that throughout *Stay With Me,* Adebayo underscores that Akin's crisis and tragedy are generated by succumbing to his mother's upholding of pre-colonial beliefs on virility and fatherhood. Adebayo employed the first-person narrative (alternating between Akin and his wife Yejide) and focalization to depict Akin's predicament as an impotent man and son, who has contemporary views on marriage, love, and polygamy, but realises the impossibility of disengaging himself from his mother's pressures to attain hegemonic masculinity. The irony and tragedy together allow to demonstrate that Akin's submitting to his mother's traditional expectations is unsatisfactory, deceptive, and tragic. Ironically, the novel criticizes Akin's clinging to hegemonic masculinity as it destroys him as well as his relationship with his wife and brother. As a response, Adebayo redefines the traditional notion of paternity from a sperm donation to caring and experiencing the joys of fatherhood. Therefore, Adebayo partly makes us see through the eyes of Akin, feel his distress; but also shows him as tragic.

Adebayo's *Stay With Me* is a narrative of how society's expectations tear a young, educated couple apart and destroy their bond. It is set in Nigeria, starting in the late 1980s and early 1990s, a time of political upheaval following an aborted election and resurgent military dictatorship. The central characters Yejide and Akin Ajayi fall in love when they meet at college, but their families, each with multiple mothers, complicate their desire for children. In particular, Yejide's mother-in-law becomes so concerned with the dreadful prospect of not having a grandson that she coerces Akin to take a second wife. Trapped by traditional expectations, the couple is depicted in the urgent position of needing to get children or risk dishonour. Difficult solutions are proposed and undertaken that have profound consequences, forever altering Yejide and Akin's relationship while Akin's

sexual impotency as the central problem remains intrinsic to their marriage. As it stands, the novel displays the plight of the childless couple in the Nigerian context.

1. Motherhood and Akin's Manhood

Masculinity in Adebayo's *Stay With Me* is extremely complicated. Making Akin a narrator alongside Yejide's voice affords an uncovering of his crisis as an impotent man in contemporary Nigeria, who is still expected to conform to pre-colonial expectations of manhood that I discussed in chapter 1. The complexity of hegemonic masculinity and its devastating effects on Akin come not least from the narrative technique through which the two fictional protagonists' experiences are generated and presented. The text characterizes itself as first-person retrospective narrative communicated by Yejide then Akin, who want to relate something they have experienced and present their reflections, viewpoints, and feelings. By retrospective narration, I refer to the temporal distance between the act of narration and the events that are narrated. In this novel the tenses are important to show the transition. It is as if the first-person narrators (Akin and Yejide) are carried into, or back to, what they are to relate. The text rapidly and demonstratively establishes a time dimension, a temporal difference between before and now. As the narration is retrospective and not simultaneous, the narrators are temporally external to the story, knowing the end when they start the narration. Yet they choose not to divulge their retrospective awareness of the obstacles they have faced during their marriage. Among them is Yejide's discovery of Akin's impotency and the endless challenges of having a childless marriage.

In the novel, the two narrative variants have the same narrative authority or level, a powerful form which mutually influence our understanding of two different perceptions.

Before I start, it is important to show the distinction between third person and first-person narratives. Franz Stanzel explains the difference between third person and first-person narrator in the following passage:

> The contrast between an embodied narrator and a narrator without such bodily determination, that is to say, between a first-person narrator and an authorial third-person narrator, accounts for the most important difference in the motivation of the narrator to narrate. For an embodied narrator, this motivation is existential; it is directly connected with his practical experiences, with the joys and sorrows he has experienced, with his moods and needs … for the third person narrator, on the other hand, there is no existential compulsion to narrate. His motivation is literary-aesthetic rather than existential.[6]

In addition to narration, Jakob Lothes explains that the first-person narrator is active in the plot, i.e., in the dynamic shaping the text's action, events, and characters. The third-person narrator is on the other hand outside or 'above' the plot, even though he is also in the text. In other words, since he does not participate in the action, the function of the third-person narrator is more purely communicative.[7] Indeed, Akin's role in the text, as the first-person narrator, is to combine the functions of narrator and character.

Yet the distinction between third person and first-person narrator is an important one not theoretically but also in the literary analysis of the novel. Tzvetan Todorov has emphasized that:

[6] Franz. K Stanzel, 'Teller-characters and reflector-characters in narrative theory', *Poetics Today*, 2 (1981), p. 93 <https://doi.org/10.2307/1772187>.
[7] Lothe, Jakob, *Narrative in Fiction and Film: An Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 21.

> There is an impassable barrier between the narrative in which the narrator sees everything his character sees but does not appear on stage, and the narrative in which a character-narrator says "I". To confuse them would be to reduce language to zero. To see a house, and to say "I see a house", are two actions not only distinct but in opposition. Events can never "tell themselves": the act of verbalization is irreducible.[8]

As the use of the personal pronoun 'I' shows, Todorov justifies the distinction between third person and first-person narrator not only existentially (like Stanzel), but also linguistically/grammatically. As a basis for this distinction these two criteria supplement each other. As it is the case in *Stay With Me*, the combination of first-person pronoun 'I' and Akin's and Yejide's active plot engagement marks them as first-person narrators.

Adebayo's use of the first-person narrative has a good effect on the readers' feelings. In a conversation with Ayobami Adebayo, she mentioned the purpose behind giving voice for Akin in the following passage:

> I was going back and forth between first person and second person. Initially we would get Yejide's perspective for the first half of the book. The second half of the book would be Akin's story. I worked on that for a couple of years and then realized that by the time the reader got to Akin, they just hated him. They'd think, we're not ready to listen to whatever he has to say. That wasn't my vision for this book. I wanted the reader, even if they didn't like him, to understand him … Then there was the second person—for about three years, I wrote Akin in second person. It was to distance him from this narrative, in that he has very high

[8] Tzvetan Todorov, *Introduction to Poetics*, trans. by Richard Howard (Brighton: Harvester, 1981), p. 39.

> expectations for himself, he's disappointed himself, and he hasn't quite come to terms with the fact that this is who he is. He's trying to justify the choices he's made. And for a very long time, I felt that the second person would capture that. But it just wasn't working. I tried the third person for him, too, and the problem of empathy came up again, that distance that I didn't want there. [9]

Different from the other female novelists discussed earlier, Adebayo's modern narrative structure shows an equal sympathy with both Yejide and Akin. Although both of the characters commit disastrous acts, none of them is explicitly criticised due to the absence of a third-person narrator. This deliberate choice to raise the reader's empathy and understanding of Akin is very significant as it might indicate a new dimension in African women's writing and African feminism.

Akin's own character and experiences come out not only in the first-person narratives, but also through focalization. Focalization in the novel does not remain fixed throughout the narrative but alternates between Akin and Yejide and juxtaposes with the views of Akin's mother. If we bring in the concept of narrative perspective, we can better see how Akin's and Yejide's main functions [as the main characters, first-person narrators, and focalizers] are combined, and how they function thematically. Focalization or narrative perspective is the angle of vision through which the story is presented. It is verbalized by the narrator, but not necessarily his own perspective. Narration and focalization are not the same, but in this novel, they are interrelated. Rimmon-Kenan argues that "focalization and narration are separate in so-called first-person retrospective narratives".[10] In *Stay With Me*, however, narration and focalization are combined, as

[9] Patrik Henry, Bass, 'Great Expectations: An Interview with Ayobami Adebayo', The Paris Review, (2017) *The Paris Review Patrik Henry Bass, Author at The Paris Review*.
[10] Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction,* p. 74.

almost everything is seen through Akin's and Yejide's eyes. As Gerard Genette was the first to point out, it is necessary in the analysis of prose fiction to distinguish between the two questions who sees? And who tells? The first question is linked to the concept of perspective as explained above. The second comes under that of narration and is related to narrative voice and speech presentation. According to Jakob Lothe, discussions of 'point of view' have often disregarded this important distinction between 'perspective' and 'narration'. He argues, "the term 'point of view' is confusingly imprecise as it may alternately refer to both perspective and voice. Although in much narrative theory perspective has come to indicate both narrator and vision, the two narrative agencies actually supplement rather than duplicate each other".[11] The complementary relationship Lothe refers to can be discerned in *Stay With Me*. Therefore, the novel depends on Akin and Yejide's status as first-person narrators and focalizers. It also foregrounds the traditional beliefs of Akin's mother toward producing children. The focalizer is defined by Rimmon-Kennan as "the agent whose perception orients the presentation".[12] The reader then has no choice but to see the fictional events with the eyes of Akin, his mother, and Yejide.

To start with, Akin's perspective can be detected through his initial perception towards the power of love. Inspired by Boris Uspensky, Rimmon-Kenan systemizes the concept of perspective by dividing it into a perceptual, a psychological, and an ideological facet. The different aspects of perspective continually blend and modify one another in narrative discourse. What Rimon-Kenan's systematization clearly shows is that perspective is something more than 'perceptual viewpoint'.[13] Throughout this section, I

[11] Lothe, *Narrative in Fiction and Film*, p. 41.
[12] Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, p. 75. Focalization is also analysed in my third chapter. But unlike in *Stay With Me*, in *Scarlet Song*, focalization and narration are not attributed to the same agent, as it is narrated from a third person narrator.
[13] Ibid., p.133.

will focus on the psychological facet of focalization (the mind and emotions) to underpin the cognitive and emotive component of the focalizers. Akin's initial cognitive orientation on love is that it can overcome his problem of impotency. Akin narrates, "before I got married, I believe love could do anything" (21). The cognitive orientation of Akin towards love reveals a deep sense that Akin believes that love can overcome all the challenges he may face in his marriage. This may also suggest that Akin is longing for love that would fulfil him and fill the gap of his impotency. At this moment in the novel, Akin views love as a cementing force for his fragile marriage with Yejide.

In addition, Akin has a more contemporary view of the marriage bond, one to be shared between just two people, though he comes from a family that is grounded in many of the older Nigerian traditions, including that of polygamy. Through its emphasis on love, the novel clearly mirrors that marriage in contemporary Nigeria is no longer between families, but between a couple only.[14] Philip Oyewale notes that "Yoruba traditional marriage, although influential has undergone remarkable changes and transformations from its earliest forms, where parents decided their children's marriage partners, to the modern era, where children make their own choices".[15] As it is discerned in the novel, monogamy is a pre-condition for Yejide's agreeing to marry Akin, reflecting their perspective on marriage in contemporary Nigeria.

In *Stay With Me*, Adebayo underscores that childlessness is not only a couple's matter, but a familial issue. Marriage for an impotent man is presented as not easy at all as Akin is situated as the hope of his mother, who will carry the family lineage through

[14] For more information on marriage patters in Yoruba society, see John Lekan Oyefara's 'Polygyny, Marital Stability and Fertility Patterns in Southwestern Nigeria'. *Ibadan Journal of the Social Sciences* 6, 1, 2008, pp. 1-10.

[15] Philip Bukola Oyewale, 'A Critical Analysis of Marital Instability among Yoruba Christian Couples in the North West of England', (doctoral thesis, University of Liverpool, 2016), p. 127 <A Critical Analysis of Marital Instability Among Yoruba Christian Couples in the North West of England - ProQuest> [accessed 13 July 2017]

marriage and fatherhood. Their persuasive message is that without fathering a child, they will be both failed. Akin narrates, "She [his mother] talked about my responsibility to her as a first son. Reminded me about the nine months when the only world I knew was inside her. She focussed on the hardship of the last three months how she couldn't get comfortable in bed and had to spend her night in a cushioned armchair" (21-22). From these lines, one can understand that Moomi [his mother] believes she is owed Akin a responsibility in a form of a reward for all her hardships during her pregnancy. Adding to that, Akin's mother reminds him about his position as a first son and its meaning, comparing him to his half-brother. She states, "you are the first son in this family, do you know what that means? Do you know what that means at all? Do you want him [his half-brother] to take your place?" (22). Therefore, the familial expectations placed upon Akin by virtue of his birth imply that he always has had to struggle to prove his worth. Indeed, Akin is a caring husband, but unable to deal with his mother's expectations among which he finds himself unable to see anything beyond hegemonic ideals of Nigerian masculinity.

Through a change in focalizer from Akin to his mother, the novel brings to the fore Akin's oppression and demonstrates how hegemonic masculine ideals can be perpetuated by motherhood. Adebayo depicts Akin's position as a first son as inextricably interrelated with his mother's status as a senior wife in a polygamous family. Therefore, preserving his mother's esteem is inextricably dependent on the worth of her first son, Akin. This is exemplified through Akin's mother who becomes so concerned with the dreadful prospect of not having a grandson after two years of a childless marriage. She begs Yejide to let Akin conceive with his second wife. She says, "You have had my son between your legs for two more months and still your stomach is flat. Close your thighs to him, I beg you. … If you don't, he will die childless. I beg you, don't spoil my life. He is my first son, Yejide" (48). We can see, here, how Moomi's language is coloured by her

perceptions and internalization of pre-colonial norms. Her identity as a mother is also involved in the process of Akin's procreation. In her plea to Yejide, Moomi asks for mercy in the name of God. She urges, "I have been good to you, I beg you in the name of God. Yejide, have mercy on me. Have mercy on me" (48). This scene illuminates the cognitive and emotive component of the psychological facet of focalization. Akin's mother's cognitive orientation shows the importance of procreation to the mother and the son alike. The emotive orientation is implied through the direct discourse which demonstrates that it is Akin's mother who has a concern more than Akin himself. The same scene is depicted in Ama Darko's *Not Without Flowers* (2007) when Idan's mother expresses her joy upon hearing that her son is a 'complete man': "do you know how troubling it is for a mother to have it impugned that her son was not a complete man?".[16] Thus, this reveals that, like Idan, Akin's overwhelming expectation to produce children is not only to himself, but also to his mother. In this regard, a childless man has to think about himself as well as his mother's position, which would only complicate his existence. This also justifies the great pressure the mother figure puts on her son to make sure he is a 'complete man', as will be discussed in the next paragraphs. As it is discerned through Akin's mother's perspective, Akin's position as a first son is not to his advantage but places a heavy burden on him.

The fear of not being seen as a man is captured by Chinua Achebe in his novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958).[17] Okonkwo attempts to maintain his manhood and reputation within his community by killing the boy Ikemfuna. Although his elderly friend, Ogbuefi Ezeudu, cautions him to avoid getting involved, Okonkwo feels compelled to do it: "The Oracle of the Hills and the Caves has pronounced it. They will take him outside Umofia

[16] Ama Darko, *Not Without Flowers* (Legon: African Books Collective, 2007), p. 209.
[17] Another masculine issue that generates fear of humiliation is tackled by Sembene Ousmane's *Xala* (1973), but sexual impotency in the novel is analysed by most critics as a metonymy for political failure.

as is the custom and kill him there. But I want you to have nothing to do with it. He calls you his father".[18] The third-person narrator in Achebe's novel narrates that: "dazed with fear, Okonkwo drew his machete and cut him down. He was afraid of being thought weak".[19] This shows that Okonkwo is not willing to kill the boy. Rather, it is the fear of being ridiculed by other men for refusing to murder a little boy. Like Okonkwo, Akin is afraid of being seen effeminate.[20]

In *Stay With Me*, Akin's oppression can be related to the way his mother views producing children. Akin's mother catalyses his pain by drawing attention to his 'othering'. On every occasion, Akin is reminded not only of his responsibility as a first son, but also of his impotency which provokes a profound sense of grievance. This is evident through the use of the technique of character foils through which Adebayo highlights Akin's differentiation and 'othering' from his mother's point of view. This is exemplified through Moomi's comparing him to his brothers who all have children. Akin recounts:

> Soon, Moomi began talking about Juwon, my half-brother. The first son of my father's second wife. It'd been years since Moomi had used him as an example … for years, she didn't talk about Juwon, and appeared to have lost interest in his life until she wanted me to marry another wife. Then she told me, as if I didn't already know, that Juwon already had four children, all boys. This time

[18] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* p. 49.
[19] Ibid., p. 53.
[20] This may justify Adebayo's influence by Achebe, as she mentions in one of her interviews. See, Erik Gleibermann, 'Nigerian Fiction Reenvisions the Masculine', *World Literature Today*, 94.2 (2020), 36-40.

> she didn't stop with Juwon but reminded me that all my half-brothers now had children (22).

Focalization in the passage is conveyed through the first-person narrative, which permits us to view how Moomi's comparison of Akin to his brothers is an instance of emotional abuse. It also shows that Moomi does not only compare Akin to his brothers, but she simultaneously compares herself to her co-wife. In this regard, the pressure put on Akin to think about his situation and react implies his mother's view on the necessity to save her worth as a senior wife through procreation.

Therefore, the novel criticises Moomi's interference in Akin's life by exposing that Akin is rather subdued and leads a frustrated life. At the beginning, Akin has always refused his mother's proposals. He, instead, negotiates with his mother searching for a better agreement that would save Yejide from heartbreak. He narrates:

> After I'd been married to Yejide for two years, my mother began to show up in my office on the first Monday of every month. She didn't come alone. Each time, she brought a new woman with her, a potential second wife. She never missed a first Monday. Not even when she was ill. We had an agreement. As long as I continued to let her bring the women to my office, she would never embarrass my wife by showing up at our home with any of her candidates; she would never mention her efforts to Yejide (23).

From these statements, we can detect the juxtaposition of Akin's attitude towards polygamy with that of his mother. Polygamy is seen by Akin's mother as a solution for his childless marriage because she knows and suspects nothing about Akin's impotency.

To Akin, on the other hand, it is something to avoid. His preference of seeing the girls brought by his mother every month indicates his rejection of polygamy. Moreover, the author pinpoints Akin's emotions. The emotive reveals the inner life of Akin by making him his own focalizer (a narrator-focalizer). It shows him overwhelmed, leading an embittered life in an infinite tide of taunts and tribulations due to the adverse effects of societal and familial pressures.

Despite that Akin is depicted as a loving man, the sense of the desperate need to accept polygamy cannot be diminished. After several negotiations and rejections of polygamy, Akin does not adjust his perspective on polygamy, but finds himself coerced to succumb to his mother's threat. What Akin and his mother perceive differently correspond to a difference in generation, perception, and knowledge.[21] As an opponent of polygamy, Akin overtly narrates his dilemma and lack of choice in the following words, "when my mother threatened that she would start visiting my wife each week with a new woman if I didn't choose one within a month, I had to make a decision. I knew my mother was not a woman who made empty threats. I also knew that Yejide couldn't bear that kind of pressure. It would have broken her" (23). Through his words, one can feel that Akin is mentally exhausted and severely drained by his mother's excessive insistence to accept polygamy. Threats and pressure are depicted as instances of emotional abuse that unfortunate men, like Akin, do suffer. In particular, Akin makes desperate attempts to save Yejide from heartbreak. By this, he shows a great sympathy with Yejide and feels her oppression. In *Stay With Me*, there is an alternation of not only narrative voice, but also in terms of point of view between Akin and Yejide. Yejide informs us that "Akin

[21] In an interview with Adebayo, she states that "this is the only world he has known, and reinventing his understanding of the world and what is possible for him is something that takes the course of a lifetime" In an interview with Adebayo, she states that "this is the only world he has known, and reinventing his understanding of the world and what is possible for him is something that takes the course of a lifetime". Gleibermann, 'Nigerian Fiction Reenvisions', p. 38.

also went in to get tested and came back saying that the doctors had found nothing wrong with him" (46). Informing Yejide that 'nothing is wrong with him' makes her believe that something is wrong with her while it is not. As such, by denying his impotency, Akin indirectly accuses Yejide of barrenness. The cognition implied, here, is that Yejide sees herself as a barren woman whose knowledge is limited though she suspects Akin's impotency. To Akin, on the other hand, he is clearly the problem. On the whole, then, his torment is the outcome of the mixture of the feelings of anxiety and sympathy with Yejide which, finally, drive Akin to select Funmi as a second wife. We can, then, assume that although childlessness places a burden on Yejide, it shows the extent to which Akin is similarly burdened to act as a polygamous man even when he is unable to do so.

Yejide, the second extra-homodiegetic narrator in the novel, describes Akin's silence through his gaze. She narrates, "his gaze held mine in a silent plea … Akin said nothing; he scratched the bridge of his nose with a forefinger" (13). It makes manifest that Akin is emotionally affected due to the problem of having a dominant mother, who is too powerful to be resisted. Akin's silent plea, here, can be understood as a plea for forgiveness as he previously promised her to remain faithful. At this point in the novel, Adebayo shifts the focalizer when Yejide assumes the role of an internal-focalizer, who observes Akin's external manifestations, allowing his emotions of anger to be inferred from them. Rimmon Kenan suggests that an internal focalizer has the position within the story from which things are observed.[22] Yejide observes Akin's anger, which is implied through 'sweat' and 'tapping' his foot when Yejide calls him "bastard" in front of his uncle (18), "his forehead glistened with beads of sweat than ran down his cheeks and gathered at his chin. He was tapping a foot to some furious beat as he clenched his jaw" (18). Unable to penetrate his consciousness and read his thoughts, Yejide has a limited

[22] Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, p. 79.

understanding of Akin's external behaviour, "his anger in his voice shook me, outraged me. I had thought his vibrating body meant he was nervous it usually did. I had hoped it meant he felt sorry, guilty" (18). Rimmon-Kenan suggests that "the focalized can be perceived either from without or from within. The first type [from without] restricts all observation to external manifestations, leaving the emotions to be inferred from them".[23] Before Akin expresses his anger, "'you called me a bastard in front of my uncle. You disrespected me'" (18), Yejide relates his shaking body to his recurrent state of nervousness. However, this time, Yejide seems to be disappointed and irritated by Akin's anger. It is no longer the same face that wears the "mix of horror and irritation" (9) whenever a member of his family visits them to discuss their childlessness. Ironically, Adebayo, here, draws attention to the fact that polygamy provokes conflicts between Akin and Yejide. Through Yejide's focalization, even if Akin is silent, his frustration is expressed throughout his 'vibrating' body.

In addition to affecting Akin's relationship with Yejide, polygamy brings troubles instead of solutions. Like Nwapa in *Idu*, Adebayo in this novel presents polygamy as devastating for Akin. His plan to save himself and Yejide from further torment turns out to his detriment. Akin's lack of choice leads him to select Funemi as a second wife among several 'candidates' as he calls them. However, Funmi, unlike Yejide, is sexually aware and soon discovers Akin's impotency, "my first instinct was to tell Funemi to pack her things immediately and leave" (94). The second wife's presence in Akin's life is designated as a disruption. Not only that, but she is presented as a threat that would expose the hollowness of Akin's pretentious position. By this, Adebayo draws attention to the vulnerability of Akin when he turns out to be a murderer. Afraid to lose his manhood, Akin accidently pushes Funemi from the stairs: "I could see her clearly as I studied the

[23] Ibid., 82.

stained glass. I could hear her final yelp, see the way her hands tried to grab the banister after I pushed her down the stairs" (135). This incident has, in fact, traumatic implications on Akin's consciousness. This is mainly because Akin has no intention to kill Funemi. All he wants is to make sure his secret is kept. Thus, through the novel captures that polygamy complicates Aki's existence and adds to his existing turmoil.

As a result, love, which Akin has believed "could do anything", is now perceived by Akin as fragile and weak in front of society's expectations. Through a series of reflections, the novel presents love as 'weak' in front of society's expectations and pressures. By this, the novel shows that Akin shifts his previous perspective towards love. This is evident when he measures love to the weight of four years without children. Akin reveals that after four years, "nobody else cared about love. My mother didn't" (21). The fact that neither Akin nor Yejide is mentioned while the mother is highlights that it is Akin's mother who views procreation as more important than love. In other words, even if Akin and Yejide care about love, the fact that his mother does not overwhelms their belief in love. He concludes:

> I loved Yejide from the very first moment. No doubt about that. But there are things even love can't do … I learned soon enough that it [love] couldn't bear the weight of four years without children. If the burden is too much and stays too long, even love bends, cracks, comes close to breaking and sometimes does break. But even when it's in a thousand pieces around your feet, that doesn't mean it's no longer love (21).

As the passage reveals, Akin is reflecting on love in a very literal way. The initial impression that love is powerful than anything else comes into contradiction when he

realises the opposite. Thus, Akin experiences disillusionment as he finds himself mistaken about the power of love.

The comparison between 'love' and 'four years without children' links to the battle between the self and society and underpins Akin's disillusionment. Personification is used in the sense that a lover is disempowered without virility and children. The comparison between love and glass could also be an allegory. Akin presents a sure manner, even when he is deceived by the end, that he still loves Yejide despite all the obstacles and the challenges they went through. It also suggests that, like any other man, an impotent man has the right to show love and be loved. However, the lesson Akin seems to have learnt is that love for an impotent man is quite delicate and is gradually ruined as it 'bends, cracks, comes close to break, and does break'. The frailty of love stands as a summary of four years of a childless marriage from its solid start till its weak end. Addressing the reader through the use of the possessive pronoun 'your' can also be understood as a call to the reader to share his understanding of love as a sexually impotent man. The description of the fragility of love in the form of a metaphor suggests that Akin is understandably disillusioned at the end and indicates how his understanding of love has changed after four years of marriage.

2. "Anger is Easier than Shame": Akin's Quest for Hegemonic Masculinity and Irony

As has been discussed in the previous section, Adebayo employed the first- person narrative and focalization to denounce the persistence of pre-colonial socialization of virility and male procreation in contemporary Nigeria through the mother figure. In this section, analysis of irony and tragedy will shed light on the tragic outcome of the tensions associated with the rigid expectations discussed earlier. While narration and focalization

convey Akin's thoughts and emotions, irony and tragedy show the implication of Akin's bewilderment, disillusionment, and dilemma. The irony in this novel lies in Akin's failure to suspect where his plan will lead him apart from falsely claiming biological fatherhood. The very deep irony reveals that Akin's decision to use his virile brother as a sperm donor, in order to attain hegemonic masculinity, save his marriage and Yejide from madness, turns out to be tragic. It generates a deep sense of anger and humiliation, and destroys Akin's relationship both with his brother, Dotun, and with Yejide. Irony is used by Adebayo to deplore Akin's tactical error. At the same time, succumbing to his mother's traditional beliefs, is presented as an unavoidable conclusion of the preceding events and pressures. This kind of irony is commonly revealed through Akin's narration and by the outcome of the story.

Stay With Me demonstrates that Akin's impotency is complicated by the socialization of childbearing and the imposition of polygamy. As a polygamous man, the expectation for Akin to produce children is higher. Thus, the need to appear superficially comfortable elicits Akin's inner sensitivity and vulnerability. Adebayo in an interview foregrounds the difficulty of defying the norms. She clarifies, "it is easy to trivialize how difficult it can be to extricate yourself from these expectations. This is the only world he has known and reinventing his understanding of the world and what is possible for him is something that takes the course of a lifetime".[24] Adebayo suggests that the longstanding pre-colonial expectations of manhood are recurrent in contemporary Nigeria, which makes it hard for Akin to impose his contemporary view of marriage, impotency, and polygamy. Although Akin outwardly hides his emotions of fear and torment, they are reflected through his clinging to false manhood. By false manhood, here, I refer to Akin's decision to save his honour using his brother's virility, which reflects the extent he is

[24] Gleibermann, 'Nigerian Fiction Reenvisions', p. 38

affected by the disclosure that he is not a man. As will be discussed throughout this section, the irony shows Akin's plan as tragic.

To start with, the novel pushes to the extreme Akin's vulnerability when he decides to use his brother, Dotun, as a sperm donor who would impregnate Yejide. The plan is not random but emerges as a result of the accumulation of various pressures which lead to something to go wrong, "knew I couldn't balance things with Yejide and Funemi under the same roof, the pressure would be too much something was bound to go wrong" (94). His decision is taken during a moment of bewilderment when he feels confused and unprepared for Yejide's psychological condition, "nothing prepared me for a Yejide who thought she got pregnant on a mountain. Didn't know what to say to her. I ate my breakfast and watched her closely. Listened to her talk. By the time the last fried yam was gone, it was obvious she didn't think she'd got pregnant on that damn mountain. She was convinced she had" (55). From this passage, we may infer that Akin's use of his senses of watching and listening to Yejide leads him to several realisations. He is made aware that they are both affected by polygamy and his mother's oppression. More importantly, they both need to prove themselves. But Akin is not only affected by his sexual condition, polygamy, and his mother's pressures, but also by Yejide's state of mind. Therefore, Akin's plan can be viewed as an amalgamation of different kinds of pressures. In this regard, Akin's claim that the decision is solely to save Yejide from insanity is not completely true. Rather, it can be also considered as a moment of reflection on his own situation. This is evident when his brother is aware of Akin's real intentions, '"you've thought about this. You've been thinking about this for a long time'. His voice accused me of many things" (187). The feeling of accusation uncovers that Akin's feeling of pity towards Yejide is not the only reason but used to convince Dotun to accept the suggested plan. Adebayo considered Okonkwo's rage in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) as she

wrote Akin's character and compared their imprisoning masculine roleplaying due to fear. She states, "fear is the thread that connects Okonkwo to Akin".[25] From here, we may deduce that masculine strength is something that both Okonkwo and Akin feel a need to perform. As a result, emotions are shown to be repressed during the prioritisation of producing children as a fundamental mode of relating to the imagined self. It is clearly born out of a keen understanding of what is expected of him and a fear so deep, which borders on terror of being seen by others to have fallen short. As such, reflecting on his current situation leads Akin to adopt fake manhood, revealing the extent of the difficulty for Akin to extricate himself from these expectations.

The tragic flaw of Akin is that though Akin deviates from the norms of Nigerian masculinity, he still feels the need to define himself through these norms. That moment of reflection on his condition brings Akin back to reality. This suggests that Akin comes to realise that the denial of his impotency is not sufficient and cannot stand for a long term. Akin narrates, "the nose kissing did it. Opened my eyes to the fact that I needed to do something before she lost her mind. At some point that Sunday morning, I decided it was time to get her pregnant. End all the crazy visits to priests and prophets once and for all. But first, I had to wait until she was ready" (57). The reference to the 'nose kissing' reflects a connection between his body and mind. Moreover, that his eyes are opened does not imply vision, but a return to reality.

However, Akin's re-engagement with reality is momentarily. His plan to assume hegemonic masculinity through his brother brings him back to his initial state of denial and illusion. Following his imagination, the plan is extremely simplified in his mind, "the master plan was to have four children: two boys, 2 girls. once every other year, Dotun was supposed to spend weekend with us, get my wife pregnant, and go back to Lagos. I

[25] Ibid., p. 38.

always assumed I was the instigator, the one who decided when it was time for them to go into a room and make babies" (220). While the novel widens the gap between appearance and reality or expectation and event, one can magnify Akin's blind confidence in his brother and the perseverance he shows in trying to avoid the unavoidable. Besides, the novel shows that the only feeling Akin expects to feel is pity for Yejide. Therefore, he excludes all other emotions, "long before I discussed it with him, I knew Dotun would agree to have sex with my wife. Steeled myself ahead of time and assumed that, when it eventually happened, the only emotion I have left would be pity for Yejide … I thought I'd pity her for the guilt she'd carry; feel sorry that she had to find comfort in a man she despised" (219). That Akin would only feel pity is not true, but imaginary. Also, in the passage a desire to exclude other emotions that may be generated after the plan can be detected. Based on his imagination and assumption, pity seems to be the easiest feeling for Akin as it is familiar since the beginning of his denial. As such, Akin is again extracted from reality to a world of illusions.

Despite of the fact that Akin claims manhood by his appearance as a father, ironical situations were created by Adebayo to convey a sharper contrast between what is hoped and what actually happens. Although the enormous decision reflects Akin's limited choice, it also stands as a criticism of Akin's unrealistic assumptions. Akin envisions himself as a father of four children, but seems to overlook the tormenting process of making Yejide pregnant, "the next month, I travelled to Lagos to see Dotun … I begged him to come to Ilesa and get Yejide pregnant" (275). Although impotency in this novel is medical, it is also depicted as a sign of a man, who is powerless to claim his inner truth. According to Douglas Colin Muecke, "what is characteristic of novels is not the method but the choice of ironic object, the greater focus upon character and the inner life of

characters".[26] His denial is not only for Yejide and his family, but it also applies to himself. According to Adebayo, "Akin doesn't want to be vulnerable, not just with his wife, but with himself" (38). Indeed, Akin seems to have internalized his family's persuasive message that without fathering a child, he is a failed man.

Using irony, the novel underlines how the duplicitous solution to the parenthood problem causes insurmountable troubles. To begin with, the irony in *Stay With Me* lies in Akin's failure to suspect where his will lead him and involves a discrepancy between appearance and reality. Cuddon's reference to paradox cited in chapter 1 can be discerned in *Stay With Me* when we consider the major disconnect between what is expected, what Akin is, and what he assumes he is. It is during the naming ceremony that Akin confronts his real self. The confrontation is shown to be extremely hard and harsh on Akin, "swallowed gulp after gulp of warm beer until I'd emptied three brown bottles back-to-back. It was easier to smile when I re-joined the crowd that had gathered in our home to celebrate with Yejide and me" (127). Drinking alcohol suggests that the ceremony cannot be accommodated by Akin's conscious self, "the naming ceremony is difficult for him," Adebayo explained, "and I think it's the moment where he thinks of himself as false in a way that he can't rationalize away. He's drunk and he's confused, but there is something deep-seated in that moment. He can't separate his sexuality from his masculinity. So, he becomes violent".[27] Indeed, rationality is something Akin strives to get rid of in order to be able to claim fatherhood. The scene fully exploits the situational irony and lets it influence the speech of Akin. Such lines we will see from novel when alcohol transports him back to illusion: "It was so much easier to be a father after three bottles of beer" (127). In the quote, a contrast between joy and torment can be detected. Akin in the lens

[26] Douglas Colin, Muckere, *Irony And The Ironic*, Methuen (New York, 1970) p. 92.
[27] Gleibermann, 'Nigerian Fiction Reenvisions', p. 38.

of the others reaches hegemonic masculinity by becoming a father, but the sense of pain cannot be diminished. He is, thus, unable to forget his real self and it is only alcohol that would help to make it easy for himself to adopt a delusive fatherhood:

> The men stood up to hand me the subsequent bottles, as though each one was a gift their own contribution to solidifying my virility and populating my family with enough children to make up for the years when quite a number of them had asked me to do something about the barren woman in my house. They gave me bottle after bottle, cheered me on each time I slammed an empty brown bottle on the table like a warlord returning from battle holding an opponent's head" (128).

The novel shows how Akin's unconscious mind engulfs reality via an overpowering illusion, thereby evading the problems of his sexual impotency. Also, in the quoted passage, a feeling of pride can be identified after drinking alcohol. Comparing himself to a 'warlord returning from battle holding an opponent's head' is significant. The phrase is associated with 'power', 'victory', 'pride'. Nevertheless, as Adebayo's novel shows, the feeling of 'pride' correlates with a loss of consciousness. It indicates that in this novel, the rational, conscious subject cannot accommodate the idea of being a father before the 'three bottles of beer'. In this regard, we may deduce that fulfilling the society's expectations through illusion does not alleviate the conscious Akin's agony. Illusion, as the only connection between Akin's fake self and the world in the novel, is eventually shown to be an obstruction from reality. Rather, the irony exposes the extent to which Akin is imprisoned by his masculine roleplay, leading to his downfall.

Moreover, the irony reveals that Akin's plan provokes feelings of shame and anger; a paradox between what he imagines in his mind and what he experiences in reality. The contrast between Akin's hopes, fears, wishes, and undertakings, and a dark, inflexible fate, affords abundant room for the exhibition of tragic irony in the novel. This kind of irony, where the false image Akin has formed of himself clashes with the image that the novel enables the reader to form. Indeed, when faced with reality regarding his uncured impotency, Akin feels shocked, disappointed, and unprepared for such a situation:

> Didn't imagine that Dotun's touch would ever become something she enjoyed. But that Saturday, instead of feeling any emotion for my wife, I wept because I felt humiliated, helpless, angry. My tears had nothing to do with Yejide. I didn't give a damn about how she felt that day. Rage coiled itself around my throat like a constrictor, made my eyes water, gave me a sharp pain in my chest each time I took a breath" (219).

This passage is remarkable in a number of respects. It is the only passage where Akin turns his attention away from the sexual scene towards his 'real' self and reminds himself who he is in reality. Also, he explicitly expresses his mixed emotions and exhibit an ironical reversal on the scale of feeling pity. During this moment, Akin feels authentic; his body is depicted as natural and unmediated by the reflective unconscious mind.

In this novel, Akin's self-image is variously revealed as false. His choice is proved to be an unreasonable one — as he sees it — further undercuts his image of himself as a rational man. He has allowed himself to be governed by elusive assumptions rather than reason. Such a reflection leads him then to feel angry and humiliated. The actual feelings

are more intense and painful than what he imagined before. Clearly, Akin is frustrated with his own passive watching behind the door and he is emotionally affected. But throughout all of this, he remains purely uninvolved:

> Could have turned back when I stood in front of our bedroom door, when it became obvious that it was too late to stop what I'd set into motion. I should have gone downstairs, left the house again. But I found that I couldn't move. I felt like my body was suddenly without bones, about to collapse. So, I clung to the stainless-steel door handle with both hands, pressing my forehead against the door frame. Tears began to slide down my cheeks as I imagined what was happening on the other side of the door (217).

Compared with the opening of the novel when Akin assumes hegemonic masculinity confidently, the ending shows him tormented by what he actually is. It is also depicted as the first time Akin reflects on his real self as an impotent man: "until that day, the tears I'd shed as an adult had all been because of Yejide" (217). In the passage above, the description of his body as one 'without bones' is significant. A body can never stand without bones. In the same way, it symbolizes Akin's perception of his body without virility. Akin's inability to return back and leave the house recapitulates his gradual de-centring and displacing from illusion into reality. Akin cannot accomplish his inner urge to make sense of his world or establish his identity, any success that he shows proves illusory.

The plan does not only result in Akin's feelings of anger and humiliation, but also leads to his self-disdain. A feeling of inferiority is profound, "I remember thinking as she came to me and put her arms around me that it was the first time, I wanted to hurt her, to

make her feel pain. My hands shook when I touched her hair. I'd always felt I didn't deserve her. Yesterday, and that day as they opened the bedroom windows to let in some fresh air, I knew I would never become the kind of man who deserved to have her" (219). That Akin wants to hurt Yejide corresponds to the extent of his own pain. He wants her to feel the same pain he feels. But, as he reflects on himself, he is now convinced that he does not deserve her. He realises that it is not Yejide who arouses the feeling pity, but himself. It makes manifest the problem in the binary opposition of the rational subject and the illusive hegemonic masculinity he adopts.

The irony of this kind abounds in the scene and in combination with the situation which threatens to explode every moment as indeed it does toward the end, creates its strongest effect. The couple's struggle shifts from the issue of fertility into infidelity. Despite Yejide's adultery, Akin does not blame her as much as he blames himself. The feeling of humiliation overwhelms his feeling of anger. He is angry, but anger is temporary and can be solved through time, but shame and humiliation are very hard for Akin, "anger is easier than shame" (243). The feelings are intense, pain leading him to weep and wish his death. This also shows if Akin is humiliated because Yejide discovers his impotency, the extent of the humiliation he may experience if he is discovered by other family members, friends and so on would be intense. This again justifies and explains Akin's necessary denial of his impotency.

The destructive effect of adopting fake manhood is addressed in another episode in *Stay With Me* when Yejide's unfaithfulness turns out into a form of revenge. Upon discovering Akin's impotency and his plan, Yejide does not only get a confirmation of her previous suspicions, but also shifts her perspective towards Akin:

> But I always wanted it to happen the way it did. Somewhere inside me, I wanted Akin to walk in on us. I wanted to look into his eyes when he did; I wanted to see him explode in some kind of passion and, that Monday, I got exactly what I wanted … when Akin walked in on Dotun and me, I was at once fulfilled and disappointed. I was disappointed because, in spite of myself, I still cared about the pain in his eyes. I shut my eyes to gather strength and raised my knees to accommodate Dotun and the only thing in focus was my husband and what he was seeing (207).

The passage above is an ironical example in which a mixture of emotions can be detected. Yejide feels 'fulfilled' as she wants Akin to feel the same pain she experiences. But, at the same time, she feels pity. Ironically, the pity Akin expects to feel towards Yejide is inverted. It is Yejide who feels pity towards Akin. However, we may discern that the feeling of revenge overwhelms pity when Yejide intently shuts her eyes to 'gather strength'.

Then, in *Stay With Me*, the role of vision could be interpreted as multifunctional. It is first depicted as the vehicle of Akin's transportation from illusion into reality. Akin experiences another shock when Yejide and Dotun continue to have sex after Akin has ended the plan, "I never thought that I would return home one day to find him thrusting into my wife without my permission" (220). But, unlike the first scene that provokes anger and shame without having visual insight, Akin's rage and feeling of humiliation are intensified through vision:

> When I walked in on the two of them the rage that had stayed coiled around my throat since that first Saturday stirred again, tightening its hold. My *eyes* met

> Yejide's and I felt *ashamed*. The *eyes* that had once looked at me as though I was all she had in the world now stared at me in contempt. She *glared* at me as if it was an *insect* she would like to *crush*. She made no move to stop DOTUN, just turned her head. I *realised* that while I'd thought my brother and I would trade places once in a while truth was that from the first Saturday he'd *occupied* vistas I'd never even glimpsed (220 my emphases).

As this passage indicates, it is through vision that Akin obtains a clear view of the scene. Moreover, vision allows him to get a grasp on how Yejide perceives him. His stigma and sense of inferiority are revealed by his repeated emphasis of the personal pronouns 'my', 'me', 'I'. Moreover, this contempt is presented with a tone that gives sense inferiority and disdain. This is mainly reflected through the simile comparing himself to an 'insect'. Reference to this particular animal in the form of a simile is very significant, informing him that he is unwanted. The comparison of his body image with 'an insect' through the way Yejide glares at him indicates the power of vision. Through Yejide' glaring, Akin is able to imagine his body. Moreover, the 'eye' does not only designate the actual act of looking, but it is merely a metaphor for the point of view. It is through the 'eyes' that Yejide expresses her adjustment of her viewpoint towards Akin. The 'eyes', as a means of expressing perspective, have well transmitted the message of disdain to Akin's eyes. Yejide equally has received the "pain in his eyes".

The rebellion of the body against the mind is not manifested through tears as in the first scene, rather it involves senses and elicits dramatic moments of violence. The feelings of humiliation and anger come back to haunt Akin, provoking his violent behavior and loss of control: "I laughed, the sound clawing its way out of me, scratching my throat. 'Devil's tool? Me? You bastard'. I punched his mouth, his nose, his eyes. I *felt*

his skin give way, *heard* his bones crack and *saw* blood flow from his nose. The pounding in my head intensified each time I rammed my fist into Dotun's face" (221). It is evidenced through this confrontation that Akin feels disempowered, emasculated, and different.

In addition to humiliation, Akin is disappointed by his brother's act. He states, "Never imagined that I would ever in seven lifetimes have to see my brother thrusting into my wife, grunting like a pig as he came … I wished Dotun were dead, that he'd never been born. But this is a lie. What I wished was that I was dead, that I'd never been born" (223). It is interesting to highlight the fact that Akin feels disappointed reveals how Akin trusts his brother, as he confronts him:

> I trusted you!' I got off him, kicked his chest until there was a bleeding gash below his nipple … it enraged me, the still-moist, limp penis between his legs. I thought of where the penis had just been, and a lifetime of rage heated up my head. I knelt between Dotun's spread-eagled legs, grabbed his limp penis and twisted it. His scream would have deafened me if I'd heard it, but the sound of my head exploding shut out everything else (222).

Akin's uncontrolled anger drives him to fight with Dotun. The extent of his anger is revealed through his loss of the sense of hearing. According to him, all he can see and hear is dictated by his rage only. He states that "there was no ready weapon within reach, no pestle, no sharp knife waiting for me to grab. I marched towards Dotun, armed with the only weapons really needed: my raging anger, my clenched fists" (220-21). Akin's deception is so deep to the point that he wishes himself dead. "I got up, cradling what was left of the lamp against my chest" (222).

Akin's plan destroys not only his relationship with his brother, but also with his wife Yejide. Yejide's perception of Akin is shaken:

> After he caught me in bed with his brother, I was sure Akin would confront me, apologise, share the struggles he'd managed to keep hidden from me and beg me to stay with him. It was hard to accept that he intended to keep up his deceit for the rest of our lives. Even after I moved out of our bedroom and stopped talking to him, I was sure who he really was and I believed that man was still there beneath all the deception and pretence. The man I thought I knew was not the kind of person who would have let me go to my grave while still deceiving me (262-3).

The way she refers to him using the noun 'that man' and 'the man' indicates that Akin becomes someone she does not know before. The author underpins this further through Akin's narration of Yejide's treatment of him and her preference of his brother. He states, "during the next couple of weeks, Yejide spent her mornings in the hospital with my brother. She stopped talking to me, would just leave my breakfast on the dining table as though she was leaving food out for a dog" (223). The fact that Yejide spends all her time with Dotun may be viewed as a kind of punishment for Akin. It also highlights his differentiation from his virile brother and adds salt to his injury, reminding him of his 'othering'. In addition to this, the fact that Akin compares himself to a dog reflects how he feels self-disdain and the mistreatment he receives from Yejide highlights her deception. The use of 'dog' is significant in this statement and has an ironic effect on Akin's unfaithfulness. While a dog is known for being faithful to his owner, Akin is not. The novel undermines Akin's plan not by an exterior narrator, but through irony. Adebayo

allows for the expression of what Cuddon calls 'varying, independent views which are not "controlled" by the author to represent the author's viewpoint', fully embracing the carnivalesque.[28] Thus, although Akin's pretence is not questioned by a third-person narrator, it is condemned by irony which exposes the tragic outcome of the tragic plan.

Akin's tragic marriage can be then viewed as the toll of his succumbing to the intense pressure to have children. I agree with Faith Daniels and Nathaniel Meni's argument that "masculinity should be open up to debate in order to bring to the fore tensions associated with it. It articulates the position that mimicry should no longer be used as a power and glory mask to overlook tensions in many families often leading to tragic consequences granted that African men were to be innovative to adopt Western health standards".[29] But, I would like to add that it is Akin's large family, his mother in particular, who disrupts his and Yejide's happy marriage by forcing him into a polygamous marriage and then to adopt false manhood. As Yejide in the novel reflects, "my home was fine without the important things they had to say" (9). This reflection highlights that the attachment to procreation is tragic and more destructive than sexual impotency. Irony, then elicits profound thought about some important issues of masculinity in the novel. The strange synthesis of the rational and the fantastic, the practical and the imaginative and the real and the mystic determines Adebayo's attitude to all the problems she chooses to tackle.

Overall, As has been discussed throughout this section, illusion is demonstrated to be highly problematic as a means of engaging with hegemonic masculinity. Akin fails to engage with hegemonic masculinity realistically. Instead, he is caught up in a cycle of illusions. Adebayo summarizes Akin's experience as "a real longing to be intimate with

[28] Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms*, p. 430.
[29] Ben-Daniels, 'African Masculinities', p. 53.

Yejide. Yet ultimately, maintaining the appearance of what he imagines a 'real man' to be is more vital than confronting who he is with her".[30] *Stay With Me* reveals the limits of an elusive identity by dramatizing bodily reactions, feeling of shame, anger, and fear. Therefore, his succumbing to his mother's traditional beliefs leads to his feeling of humiliation and destroys his relationship with Yejide and his brother.

3."Paternity is More Than Sperm Donation": Character foils and Paternity

In the previous section, I examined Adebayo's use of irony to reveal the tragic end of imposing fatherhood on Akin, which leads him to adopt fake manhood to his own detriment. The last section will explore Adebayo's use of character foils to subvert the Yoruba society's imposition of conception as an identity tag into the joys of fatherhood. The contrast between Akin and his brother Dotun highlights that paternity is beyond sperm donation. Although Akin's status as a father remains an illusion, it leads him to experience what the biological father Dotun does not with his own children.

As has been discussed earlier, Akin's yearning to comply with society's expectations of fatherhood through illusion is tragic. Nevertheless, the illusory transition from an impotent man to a father is accompanied by Akin's feeling of joy. Throughout *Stay With Me*, Adebayo uses character foils to pinpoint that paternity is more than a sperm donation. The novel demonstrates that it is possible for the hegemony of fatherhood to be challenged or subverted by Akin's feelings of love of joy. This point is made more forcefully through Akin's reflection on fatherhood when the doctor reveals to Akin that Sesan is not his son:

[30] Gleibermann, 'Nigerian Fiction Reenvisions', p. 38.

> But I knew Sesan was my son. I loved him. I was planning for his future, had bought shares in his name. I often thought of the day I'd buy him his first bottle of beer. Could hardly wait to teach him how to play table tennis at the sports club. I knew I was the one who would do all those things. Nobody else would do them. There are things scientific tests cannot show, things like the fact that paternity is more than sperm donation. I knew Sesan was my son. There was no test result that could change that (186).

This passage reveals that Adebayo not only shows the negative effects of illusion, but also takes into consideration the bright side of Akin's plan. It allows Akin to view things differently from his society and family. The doctor does not remind Akin about this fact. In contrast, this revelation shows that Akin is convinced that he is the true father not biologically, but through his love and devotion. Thus, the doctor's revelation does not shake his convictions, but reinforces them. The sensations of joy that Akin's gains cannot be perceived by a society that relates fatherhood to social status. Rather, Akin's own concept goes beyond sperm donation. Therefore, the novel subverts this notion by exposing that although Akin is not the biological father, he experiences a deep sense of joy.

The concept of 'fatherhood' is experienced by Akin not merely a tag of male identity. It is literalised in the actual sense of feeling it and assuming responsibility. This is illustrated through Akin's taking full responsibility towards the children. Yejide states, "about a month after Sesan started kindergarten, Akin took him to the hospital for some

routine tests. It was the sort of thing Akin did, like buying hundreds of shares for Sesan on every birthday or having a children's school fees savings account that he deposited money in every month from the day we got married" (167). According to this statement, Akin assumes full responsibility towards Sesan though it is his brother Dotun who is the biological father. In another scene when Akin discovers Sesan's illness, he assumes the role of the real father, who is willing to save his son from disease. He recounts, "I trusted in medical science, believing it could fix Sesan if I spent enough money. And I was ready to spend all I had" (183). This captures the sense of Akin's readiness to spend all his money to provide treatment for Sesan.

In addition to joy, Akin also experiences the sorrow of losing one's children. This is evident in a scene when Akin expresses his deep grief through his tears. Yejide narrates, "he would never admit it, but I felt his tears that day, they plastered my dress to my belly and validated my grief" (150). This passage indicates that both sexes feel the same agony, though men tend to hide their emotions. Moreover, the equation is significant. The novel transcends this difference, exposing that they both share the same grief despite that Yejide is the biological mother while Akin is not. Akin's sadness is also addressed in another episode when he becomes speechless after he learns about the death of Sesan. He even loses mobility. He tells, "I couldn't lie, couldn't tell the truth, didn't have the energy to say a word. I just stared at her [Yejide]… I couldn't even nod. I was weak, exhausted. I didn't even try to hold her when she put her forehead against the dashboard and began to cry" (202). His inability to lie or tell the truth suggests the sorrow is expressed in his speechlessness. This does not only point to Akin's deep sorrow, but it also symbolically draws attention to the binary opposition of the 'biological' and the 'caring' father.

Furthermore, the momentary exchange between Akin and the child Rotimi symbolises a recovery for Akin's previous wounds. Adebayo clarifies that "If there will

be any redemption for him I suppose it's in that relationship with Rotimi, not only in how readily he takes on the responsibility of being her primary caregiver but in how he recognizes instinctively that only this infant can bestow the mercy of affection untainted by knowledge".[31] Indeed, Akin appreciates the child's innocence and unawareness of his past, "I stood by her cot, listened to her soft babble. Let her wrap her little fingers around my thumb. In her eyes, I was brand new, forgiven, unstained" (224). Given that a baby cannot differentiate between people and express his/her views, it is not Rotimi who perceives Akin as 'brand new', 'forgiven', and 'unstained'. Rather, it is Akin's momentary self-definition with Rotimi. He actually sees himself through Rotimi's attachment to him. This also points to a comparison between Rotimi's innocence and the harsh treatment Akin receives from his surroundings. Such an intimate feeling of affection brings Akin joy and fulfilment.

Rotimi has also a symbolic significance in the novel. As she is the only child who survives sickle cell disease, she is a symbol of hope for Akin. Her presence in Akin's life is so important. Akin narrates, "Rotimi saved me from despair, helped me find my way back to hope … there was something comforting about her weight and the warmth of her breath against my chest. It had been a while since I had been that close to another human being" (244). Through this description, we may sense Akin's gratitude to the role Rotimi plays in saving him from despair. Thus, despite his woundedness, Akin manages to achieve some genuine intimacy with Rotimi.

Stay With Me inverts paternity and alters the meaning of being a father through Akin's experience. Although Akin's plan has devastating effects, it also makes him realize that fatherhood can be heartfelt and not necessarily as an expression of

[31] Gleibermann, 'Nigerian Fiction Reenvisions', p. 38.

masculinity, as the society has defined it, “she [Rotimi] said it two more times before she went back to sleep, as if she knew that I needed to hear the word again. Each time she said it, it was like an absolution. That simple word lifted the crushing weight of Dotun’s letters and all my mistakes just a bit” (245). Such description points that what Akin truly needs is emotional rather than a tag of manhood. As such, he even feels grateful to his brother, “I didn’t intend to ever respond to Dotun’s letter, but as Rotimi pulled my nose and laughed each time I yelped, I could no longer deny that I owed him something in spite of his affair with Yejide” (271). Through his experience with Rotimi, he obtains the pure sensation of being a father without actually being one biologically.

Nevertheless, as Adebayo’s novel shows, reaching happiness does not mean having children. Happiness can be experienced even by a childless couple, “it was the lie I’d believed in the beginning. Yejide would have a child and we would be happy forever. The cost didn’t matter. It didn’t matter how many rivers we had to cross. At the end of it all was this stretch of happiness that was supposed to begin only after we had children and not a minute before” (253). His experience as a childless man and as a fake father teaches him a lesson different from what his mother has taught him:

> I never began the story with Moomi’s Olomo lo l’aye saying. I’d believed her once, I’d accepted –like the tortoise and his wife –that there was no way to be in the world without an offspring. I had thought that having children who called me Baba would change the very shape of my world, would cleanse me, even wipe away the memory of pushing Funmi down the stairs. And though I told Rotimi the story many times, I no longer believed that having a child was equal to owning the world (249).

This passage reveals that Akin adjusts his perspective towards the relationship between happiness and having children. Not only that, but Akin realizes his mistakes that 'there was no way to be in the world without an offspring'. Moreover, the fact that he changes the beginning of the story suggests his willingness to see change in society. In contrast to his mother's teaching through storytelling, he, instead, does not want Rotimi to internalize the same mistake he went through.

On the other hand, Dotun's experiences of fatherhood are purely biological, devoid of all feelings. Akin and Dotun are foils for one another, they are intentionally used by Adebayo to be compared and contrasted in order to shed light on their divergent conceptions of fatherhood. Through Dotun's character traits, Nwapa allows readers to see what producing children without responsibility looks like, and this is developed in multiple ways. Dotun's role as a father is only limited to sperm donation as Akin explains, "I already knew that Dotun was the sperm donor. That was how I thought about what he did for me –sperm donation. I knew Dotun would never claim he was Sesan's father, which is the reason I went to him when I eventually accepted the fact that I needed someone else to get my wife pregnant" (186). As this quote shows, there are constant references to sperm. The 'sperm donor' is used as Dotun's identification. This provides an essential contrast to Akin whose perception of Dotun as a sperm donor is confirmed by the outcome of the events in the novel. This is first evident when Dotun agrees for the plan suggested by Akin. He, later, shows no sign of attachment to the children he produces for Akin. In contrast to Akin, Dotun has no feelings towards his children in all situations. We see no sign of worry or sorrow from Dotun when the children suffer from sickle cell disease. Then, the novel points out that this expression of masculinity is not necessarily heartfelt but can be devoid of any emotional parental attachment. The process of 'sperm donation' is therefore demonstrated as the transition from a subject to an object and vice

versa. In this sense, Adebayo inverts the conception of fatherhood from biological to emotional parenthood. These constant references to 'sperm' establish this idea, particularly as they inform the reader of Dotun's qualities and how the body conceived of as an object of reproduction affects his relationship with his children. *Stay With Me* provides readers with a complex interrogation of fatherhood and thus presents Akin as someone to be valorised for his caring qualities.

Dotun's role in Adebayo's *Stay with me* can be compared to Taju's behaviour and role in Lola Shoyenin's novel *The Secret Li34ves of Baba Segi's Wives (*2007).[32] Taju is Baba Segi's driver, and the man who is actually the father of Segi, Baba Segi's first child. However, like Dotun, he is only a sperm donor based on the Nigerian society's definition of who a man is. Yet, they are not responsible for the upkeep of his children either emotionally or financially. But they are rather respected as men because they can perform the biological role of producing children, which Baba Segi and Akin cannot.

In Stay *with Me,* Adebayo redefines the concept of fatherhood and points out that men like Akin deserve respect and acknowledgment rather than sperm donors, who do not take responsibility. Akin does not only play the role of a father, but successfully performs the role of a nurturing mother. Perhaps a most emotionally charged imagery of his role as a father is evident when he has to carry his sick child, Rotimi, to the hospital by raising her high above his head so that the soldiers on the streets do not shoot him or his child. Akin's caring qualities as a parent are evident when he stays with Rotimi and sees her through her daily struggles as a sickle cell patient and even play a nurturing maternal role. These qualities are highly valued in the novel though they are not enough to make him a man per the society's standards. Consequently, via character foils, the

[32] Lola Shoyenin, *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* (Abuja: Cassava Republic Press, 2010).

novel criticises the socialization of fatherhood, and suggests love and care as qualities that require more respect and recognition.

Conclusion

This final chapter has demonstrated that throughout *Stay With Me,* the socialization of virility and fathering children perpetuated by Akin's mother is devastating. I have argued that Akin and Yejide are slowly pulled apart by the pressure of childlessness and not by sexual impotency. Through this, Adebayo presents a sharp criticism of the social and family pressures, which lead the male protagonist Akin to deny his impotency and forcefully accept polygamy, as has been discussed in the first section. The irony, in the second section, showcases that Akin's attempt to attain hegemonic masculinity through his virile brother is an act leading to great complexities rather than hiding his supposed deficiencies. On the other hand, in the final section I have demonstrated that it is through this journey that Akin experiences the joy of paternity. As such, I have argued that Adebayo subverts the hegemonic expectation of fatherhood from a sperm donation to the actual sense of paternity through the use of character foils. In addition, throughout the novel, she reveals the tragic consequences of those expectations on men, women, and children.

General conclusion

In *Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa*, Lindsay and Miescher recognise the importance of addressing continuities and disruptions in gender systems in Africa in order to promote nuanced understandings of African masculinities:

> It makes sense to consider African gender relations as a "patchwork of patriarchies", some imposed through colonialism, others locally derived … this means that we need to be sensitive not only to innovations and ruptures, but also to the powerful continuities in gender systems that resurfaced in various situations. The African 'big man' provides perhaps the most enduring image of African masculinity.[1]

For Lindsay and Miescher, the improvisation on the 'big man' ideal, which persisted throughout the colonial and post-colonial periods, provides an effective means of identifying the interrelation between change and continuity. Though Lindsay's and Miescher's argument falls within the field of sociology and history, it illuminates the central focus and objective of this project. The aim of this research is to broaden interpretations of the concept of hegemonic masculinity in African literature and women's writing in particular, highlighting the value of literary depictions in allowing us to delve into the consciousness of male characters and examine the shared and distinctive

[1] Miescher, 'Introduction', in *Men and Masculinities,* p. 3.

aspects of Sub-Saharan masculinities over time. A chronological literary study allowed me to underline the West African female authors' portrayals of hegemonic masculinity in its relation to patriarchy, as well as how it is influenced by other social and external forces such as colonialism.

This study provided an analysis of West African masculinities in the chosen novels of Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, Mariama Bâ, Ama Ata Aidoo, and Ayobami Adebayo. While this project has canvassed novels written by post-colonial West African female authors, it has necessarily restricted its analysis to five texts which express overt fascination with gender, patriarchy, and domestic matters. A rationale for selecting these novels was based on their multifarious focus on various aspects of male issues, male infertility, colonialism, polygamy, assimilation, modernity, and impotency. With such orientations, I believe that these Sub-Saharan female novelists are amongst the writers whose literary practice has sought to dismantle patriarchy and Sub-Saharan hegemonic masculinity ideals.

The objective of this research was to examine the ways in which hegemonic masculinity intersects with the persistence of West African patriarchal and traditional norms, the effects of colonialism and its legacy, as well as modernity. In addition, given that masculinity is fluid, unstable, and intersectional, the preceding five chapters chronologically explored distinctive case studies of divergent forms of hegemonic masculinity and their negative effects on male characters in each context.[2] The study underlined the necessity to foreground the limits of hegemonic masculinity, pushing beyond previous readings that associate these works with feminism and male

[2] By chronologically, I refer to the periods in which the novels are set and produced.

stereotypes.[3] My study also affirmed how the chosen female authors are widely acknowledged for their work in deconstructing hegemonic masculinity.

The first question concerned representations of the factors that influence the constructions of West African masculinities in the selected novels. My analysis of masculinity in the five novels indicated that, although biological factors, such as sexual impotency and infertility, are portrayed as significant determinants of the male characters' lives, the novels emphasise the role of patriarchy and other social factors forces in the shaping subjectivity and influencing male characters' agency. Social forces, such as gender roles, race, sexuality, and traditions, pervade male characters, governing their thoughts and actions. Male characters in the novels are shown to operate, by necessity, within the domain of these Sub-Saharan patriarchal discourses and structures as they define the ways in which they should practise masculinity. Therefore, these masculine expectations are shown to be necessary for being accepted within the West African societies and are, therefore, difficult to escape or renounce. Those who articulate alternatives or unwillingly stand outside of these discourses, such as Amarajeme in Nwapa's *Idu*, are indefinable, treated as unmanly, and become subject to ridicule. In being subjected to judgment in cases of non-conformity, male characters strive to discipline themselves to conform with hegemonic masculinity.

In addition to representations of the detrimental effects of Sub-Saharan indigenous patriarchal and traditional factors, this study found that colonialism and its legacy had a significant impact on West African masculinities in the novels. British colonialism in Nigeria and Ghana and French colonialism in Senegal are presented as disruptors of pre-colonial masculine ideals. The subversion of traditional Nigerian gender roles is one of the effects of colonialism discussed in Chapter 2. The male protagonist Nnaife in

[3] See Introduction, p. 17.

Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* is feminised, whereas his wives, Nnu Ego and Adaku, are masculinised in the city of Lagos. In addition to the redefinitions of masculinity during and after colonialism, the novels bring to the fore the identity crisis, fragmentation, and uncertainty that appear to torment the male characters' consciousness and affect their marital relationships, as was discussed in Chapter 3.

Throughout the five novels, the male characters' internalization and eventual decision to yield to dominant models of West African masculinity demonstrate the very real pressures to which they are subjected. Via these constant (re)negotiations, an outcome of tormenting pressures, contribute to the process of perpetuating hegemonic masculinity. The first point to be made here is the importance of the community in upholding traditional customs in pre-colonial times. As has been demonstrated in chapter 1, mockery and gossip are means by which masculine ideals are maintained and buttressed in the Ugwuta community.

Hegemonic masculinity is also shown to be mutually reinforced by homosociality. Male friendship in *Scarlet Song* and *Changes* plays a great role in maintaining societal discourses of hegemonic ideals of masculinity. Ousmane's friends exercise much influence over his attitude towards negritude and assimilation as well as over his self-perception as a traitor of his origins. Similarly, Oko's male friends deepen his sense of shame through their laughter, a point which seems to compound his self-perception of failure. In addition to influencing constructions of masculinity, male friendship contributes to the creation of male hierarchy, including dominant, subordinate, or marginalised masculinity, enacting power dynamics, a notion which is illustrated most forcefully in *Changes*.

With the exception of *Idu* and *The Joys Of Motherhood*, motherhood is a prominent theme in these novels. The mother figure in the other three novels plays a key

role in their sons' identity formation and appears to provide a blueprint for the son. Not living up to this expectation is but another potent pressure exerted on the fictional characters under scrutiny here, since maternal esteem or commendation carries more weight than that of any other female associate. Ousmane's mother in *Scarlet Song* is portrayed as an over-protective mother, who not only disapproves his marriage to a white girl but does her best to break it. The same applies to Oko in *Changes*. The pressure he receives from his mother and sisters to accept polygamy in order to produce more children torments him further. The influence of the mother-figure is central to Ousmane and Oko's formations of masculinity, but it is in Adebayo's *Stay With Me* that the influence of the mother is more prominent. In her novel, Adebayo underscores that Akin's crisis and tragedy are generated by succumbing to his mother's upholding of pre-colonial beliefs on virility and fatherhood. The inevitability of disengaging himself from his mother's pressures to attain hegemonic masculinity leads Akin to submit to his mother's traditional expectations, which turn to be unsatisfactory, deceptive, and tragic. Ironically, the novel criticizes Akin's clinging to hegemonic masculinity as it destroys him as well as his relationship with his brother and wife. These male characters, then, are shown to be largely constrained by the detrimental impact of their mothers, who play a major role in the destruction of their marriage.

Based on these factors, there have been debates as to whether resisting hegemonic masculinity is shown to be possible in the novels. With the exception of Lamine in Bâ's *Scarlet Song*, the novels do not envisage the possibility of resisting prevailing gender, race, and class structures. Throughout the five novels, the male characters' internalisation and eventual decision to yield to dominant models of West African masculinity demonstrate the very real pressures to which they are subjected. Manhood is shown to be a tag the male characters are unable to decline but obliged to attain and maintain at ruinous

expense. The first point to conclude is the importance of the community in upholding traditional customs, through which masculine ideals can be maintained and buttressed more generally. In *the Joys of Motherhood*, for example, despite being subject to colonialism and its influences, Emecheta underlines Nnaife's internalisation of Ibuza values and his willingness to shore up traditional expectations. Hegemonic masculinity is also shown to be mutually reinforced by male friendships in *Scarlet Song* and *Changes*, playing a significant role in maintaining societal discourses of hegemonic ideals of masculinity. Ousmane's friends exercise a strong influence over his attitudes towards négritude and universalism, as well as over his self-perception as a traitor to his Wolof origins. Similarly, Oko's male friends deepen his sense of shame through their laughter, a point that seems to compound his own perception of his failure. In addition to influencing the constructions of masculinity, male friendship contributes to the creation of male hierarchy, including dominant, subordinate, or marginalised masculinity, as is illustrated most forcefully in *Changes*. Moreover, this study found how the mother figures play a key role in their sons' identity formation and appear to provide a blueprint for the son. Not living up to this expectation is yet another potent pressure exerted on the fictional characters under scrutiny since maternal esteem or commendation carries more weight than that of any other female associate. Ousmane's mother in *Scarlet Song* is portrayed as over-protective, not only disapproving of his marriage to a white girl, but also doing her best to break it. The same applies to Oko in *Changes*, in that the pressure that he feels from his mother and sisters to accept polygamy in order to produce more children torments him further. The influence of the mother figure is central to Ousmane and Oko's formations of masculinity, but it is in Adebayo's *Stay With Me* that the influence of the mother is more prominent. Adebayo underscores that Akin's crisis and tragedy are generated by succumbing to his mother's upholding of pre-colonial beliefs of virility and

fatherhood. The inevitability of disengaging himself from his mother's pressures to attain hegemonic masculinity leads Akin to submit to his mother's traditional expectations. These male characters, then, are shown to be largely constrained by the detrimental impact of their community, friends, and mothers, who play a key role in their dilemma and destruction of their marriages.

The third question that I raised is about the female novelists' representations of the outcomes of conforming to hegemonic masculinity. What can be deduced throughout the chapters is that across pre-colonial, colonial, post-colonial, and modern periods, the process of being or becoming a man is described as an uneasy process. For instance, both Adiewere and Amarajeme in *Idu* aspire to develop a masculine identity compliant with the norms of the Igbo community but are afflicted by childlessness. The Nigerian pre-colonial association between hegemonic masculinity and male reproduction is portrayed as devastating. Adiewere and Amarajeme's inability to produce children, which is not deliberate self-marginalisation, provokes anxiety, fear, and arouses a feeling of shame. While Adiewere becomes a father and manages to escape his subordinate position in the masculine hierarchy, Amarajeme is victimised by hegemonic patterns of Igbo manhood. Similarly, Nnaife, in *The Joys of Motherhood* is trapped within a hierarchy in which he cannot exercise authority across both private and public spheres, but from which he also cannot escape, thus rendering him subordinate.

Furthermore, the novels demonstrate that hegemonic masculinity is not always in accordance with male characters' desires or capabilities. Instead, the prevailing norms of Sub-Saharan masculinity prove to be constraining, unsatisfactory, and difficult to pursue. What distinguishes this corpus from other texts is their critical tone and a more radical interrogation of the dominant discourses of masculinity and class. Adiewere has no interest in polygamy, but the community's pressures on Idu lead him to take a second a

wife. Conflicting feelings of doubt, anxiety, patience, and rejection of polygamy shape Adiewere's response towards childlessness. This ongoing oscillation of feelings and Adiewere's recognition of his own position suggests that he is keenly aware of the strict confines of dominant masculinity.

A common issue exposed throughout this research is troubled male-female relationships. All of the male characters examined in this study appear to have a harmonious relationship with their wives. In Nwapa's *Idu*, for example, Amarajeme, though indirectly accusing his wife of barrenness, is in love with her. In *Scarlet Song* and *Stay With Me*, Oko and Akin have a modern perspective on marriage and love. In both *Scarlet Song* and *Changes*, for instance, Ousmane and Oko conform to hegemonic masculinity as a result of their families' intolerance of equal relationships between men and women. These two novels suggest that Ousmane and Oko are willing to adapt to social changes brought about by modernisation while their families continue to be steeped in traditional gender roles and the concept of marriage. This antagonism, then, provokes conflicting male-female relationships. In addition, the intersection between colonialism and indigenous norms in the *Joys of Motherhood* constitutes the main reason for the problematic relationship between Nnaife and Nnu Ego. Nnaife's acceptance of polygamy intensifies the rift in his relationship with Nnu Ego. The male-female relationships in these texts, therefore, are problematic and unstable.

Love in the novels is shown to be hard to maintain under the pressure to fashion subjectivity in accordance with the models that West African societies offers. Even though hegemonic masculinity is what most of the male characters seek in the private domain, it is not all that they need. An important point which the female authors emphasize in their novels is that men, like women, long for emotional fortification, a need not reflected in the definitions offered by prevailing discourses of Sub-Saharan

masculinity. Ousmane, Oko, and Akin not only show love to their wives, but they also want to be loved and cared for. Ousmane, for instance, feels empowered not merely through the assertion of authority over his wife Mireille, but by finding himself the object of affection. However, Akin in *Stay With Me*, realises that love is weak in a society that prioritises procreation. As far as patriarchy is concerned, love may signify a suspension of power relations, a deeply threatening prospect for the implicit yet ever present patriarchal regime. Therefore, love, though desired, appears to be impossible to sustain for the fictionalised men depicted here.

An intense anxiety, one of the shared feelings that permeates each of these five novels, is symptomatic of the emotional crisis experienced by male characters. In *Idu*, Adiewere's childlessness coupled with the community's pressures to take a second wife triggers his worry and reveals the extent to which he is negatively affected by the Igbo's attachment to producing children. Through the use of focalization and narrative perspective, *Idu* shows its male protagonist, Adiewere, in a state of dilemma. Adiewere attempts to resist the norms by favouring his monogamous marriage and love but is worried about his position as a childless man. Likewise, Nnaife's drinking and staying out in *The Joys of Motherhood* foregrounds his mental stress over the economic situation in Lagos. Oko, in *Changes*, experiences great distress when thinking about his friends' laughter. The same can be seen in *Stay With Me* through Akin's bewilderment when his mother relates her status to his virility.

Noticeable feelings of humiliation and fear that pervade each of these novels are also detected in several ways. Firstly, the male characters discussed in this study are isolated. None of these men have good relationships with women, friends, and family, thus signalling a disassociation from those around them. Nnaife, for example, is alienated from his extended family in Ibuza. Emecheta exposes Nnaife's vulnerability when feeling

ashamed to return to his community and admit failure; his choice to stay emasculated in colonial Lagos implies that any challenge to the Ibuza community's standards of manhood cannot be tolerated. Ironically, perhaps, only Lamine, in *Scarlet Song*, who chooses to subvert the Wolof hegemonic gender ideals, appears to evade this affliction. All of the characters examined here, except Lamine, fail to embody the values incumbent upon them, which provokes multiple forms of affliction.

Ultimately, irony is significantly present in all of the novels under discussion which leads to some important issues that prevail in each setting. The force of the social and foreign circumstances proves stronger than the intentions of the male characters and emerges triumphant from the struggle. I demonstrated that diverse situations in the selected novels have been given an ironic swivel. I have argued that the use irony in the chosen writers' style is to unfold the inconsistency and contradictions between what is expected from the male characters and what they actually are. Indeed, through irony, various feelings are expressed by the male characters and certain situations get permeate with ironic implications in the novel. For instance, Nnaife, Ousmane, Oko, and Akin realise that they have achieved something quite different from what they set out to achieve. Therefore, the use of irony leads the male characters to remorse and crisis is presented as an inevitable outcome. These ironic examples, in each case, offer a way into the complexities of the male characters' masculinities. As has been demonstrated, regret is one feeling-quality common to all the instances of irony and that this is something obliterated by tragic irony.

Tragedy is also employed in the novels as a critique of imposing hegemonic masculinity. One of the common flaws detected in the male characters in this study is their inability to define themselves outside of patriarchal norms. They all have mistakenly assumed that things are as they seem to be or will turn out as expected. These characters'

internalisation of masculine ideals combined with their surroundings' pressures lead to their tragic end. Using tragedy in *Idu*, Nwapa vehemently criticises hegemonic masculinity in this novel. She reveals that, to the community, the impotent male character Amarajeme commits a 'crime' far worse than that of a barren woman, depicting him as 'a non-man' and 'non-person' to be scorned by both men and women. At the same time, Amarajeme is presented as a tragic character; an over-reacher who attempts to overcome his sterility through illusion and plunges recklessly into a void of self-destruction. In *The Joys of Motherhood*, Nnaife's traditional thinking and inability to cope with modernity and Lagos raises another fundamental issue that results in his downfall. Ousmane's fluctuating position in *Scarlet Song* is just as tragic; his inability to establish a balance between négritude and assimilation provokes feelings of instability, breaks his marriage with Mireille, and leaves him in a cyclical dilemma. Similarly, Aidoo, in *Changes* suggests that Oko's use of sexual violence against his wife is, in fact, self-limiting and inherently self-destructive, culminating in the collapse of his marriage and feelings of regret. Adebayo, in *Stay With Me*, underlines that Akin's tragic end is triggered by succumbing to his mother's upholding of pre-colonial beliefs of virility and fatherhood. Irony and tragedy together are employed to demonstrate that Akin's submitting to his mother's traditional expectations turns out to be unsatisfactory, deceptive, and tragic.

This study found that the selected female novelists expressed sympathy with male issues. Portraying male characters as individuals governed by the social and foreign forces that define their subjectivities, novelists reflect another facet of hegemonic masculinity; one which does not privilege them as men but constrains them. By extending critical attention to a large array of male characters in the novels under scrutiny, I addressed themes not previously explored in African literature and women's writing, in particular, such as infertility, subversion of gender roles, polygamy, and impotency. This study is

intended to be seen as a contribution to the currently available discussions of representations of masculinity, while also providing new areas of investigation.

This project has raised several questions that might be of relevance to future research in this field. The portrayal of the themes that I discussed in this thesis, such as patriarchy, childlessness, and polygamy also merit exploration in further research. Due to time limitations, I only included one Francophone novel. I believe that including other Francophone female novelists from West and North Africa would enrich existing research into masculinity in Francophone literature. It may be valuable to apply this approach to the discussion of other African novels, written by both male and female authors, with a view of ascertaining and comparing how hegemonic masculinity is depicted through both a male and a female lens. Another crucial research question prompted by this research is considering how a study on how African male authors, who are as interested in dismantling the patriarchal order as female authors, will offer new contributions to the field of African literature and masculinity studies. Indeed, while a majority of scholars have focused on politics in male writing, few commentators have addressed concerns with male domestic issues.

Finally, it should be noted that African novels have recently ignited the interest of many film directors, with the result that literary texts are adapted into cinema. This interest explains the need for further work on the cinematic adaptations, weighing the implications of these differences on the way in which scholars perceive their artistic distinction, as well as their depictions of African masculinities. An intertextual analysis of African novels and their movie adaptations that examines the ways in which audio-visual, verbal, and textual narrative strategies would be rewarding to investigate the latent nuances in these adaptations as African literary narratives prove helpful for directors in reflecting on and translating African novelists' marked fascination with gender issues.

Therefore, it may be interesting to reappraise the adaptations with portrayals of masculinity in mind, examining whether textual and audio-visual narratives are compatible or exhibit striking dissimilarities. For instance, contrasting perspectives may occur due to multiple factors relevant to specificities in representation and contrasting modes of engagement. Sometimes, divergences in the portrayal of masculinity are determined by societal and cultural factors given the jarring gap between the narratives' contexts of production. Significantly, however, differences in perspectives may also pertain to personal editorial preferences. Indeed, while directors tend to maintain a more-or-less similar plot, characterisation, setting, and dramatization, they may still incorporate or even elide specific details and scenes in a way that would consolidate their personal visions and validate the originality of their respective works.

Works Cited

Achebe, Chinua, *African Intellectual Heritage* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996)

_____, *Things Fall Apart* (London: Heinemann, 1958)

Adebayo, Aduke, 'The African Mother: Her Changing Perceptions in West African Fiction', in *African Masculinities: Men in Africa from the Late Nineteenth Century to the Present*, ed. by Robert Morrell and Lahoucine Ouzgane (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 1-20

Adebayo, Ayobami, *Stay with Me* (Lagos: Ouida Books, 2017)

Adinkrah, Mensah, 'Better Dead than Dishonoured: Masculinity and Male Suicidal Behaviour in Contemporary Ghana', *Social Science & Medicine* 74.4 (2012), 474–81 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2010.10.011>

Adjei, Mawuli, 'Male-Bashing and Narrative Subjectivity in Amma Darko's First Three Novels', *SKASE Journal of Literary Studies* 1.1 (2009), 47–61 <Microsoft Word - Adjei-1.doc (psu.edu)> [accessed 28 December 2016]

Aidoo, Ama Ata, *Changes: A Love Story* (New York: The Feminist Press African Classics, 1993)

Ajayi, Omofolabo, 'Negritude, Feminism, and the Quest for Identity: Re-Reading Mariama Bâ's *So Long a Letter*', *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 25 (1997), 35-52

Allan, Tuzyline Jita, 'Afterword', in Ama Ata Aidoo, *Changes: A Love Story* (New York: Feminist Press, 1993), pp. 171-193

Amadiume, Ifi, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1987)

Androne, Mary Jane, 'Nervous Masculinities: Male Characters in Ama Ata Aidoo's Changes', in *Essays in Honour of Ama Ata Aidoo at 70: A Reader in African Cultural Studies*, ed. Anne V. Adams (Banbury: Ayebia Clarke, 2012), pp. 149–160

Ashcroft, Bill and others, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (London and New York 2000)

Bâ, Mariama, *Scarlet Song*, trans. by Dorothy S Blair (Essex: England, Longman, 1994)

Badinter, Elisabeth, *On Masculine Identity*, trans. by Lydia Davis (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992)

Barfi, Zohra, and others, 'A Study of Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* in the Light of Chandra Talpade Mohanty: A Postcolonial Feminist Theory', European Online Journal

of Natural and Social Sciences, 4.1 (2015), 26-38 <https://european-science.com/eojnss/article/view/2166> [accessed 15 January 2021]

Bass, Patrik Henry, 'Great Expectations: An Interview with Ayobami Adebayo', *The Paris Review*, (2017) The Paris Review Patrik Henry Bass, Author at The Paris Review

Beasley, Christine, 'Rethinking Hegemonic Masculinity in a Globalizing World', *Men and Masculinities*, 11 (2008), pp. 86-103

Ben-Daniels, Faith, and Nathaniel Glover-Meni, 'African Masculinities: Discussing the men in Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wive*s (2013) and Adebayo's *Stay with Me* (2017)', *Nairobi Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4.4 (2020), 53-69 <https://royalliteglobal.com/njhs/article/view/329> [accessed 15 March 2021]

Benita, A, 'Bonds and Burdens of Motherhood in Perumal Murugan's *One Part Woman* and Ayobami Adebayo's *Stay With Me*: A Comparative Study', *Literary Endeavour*, IX.3 (2018), 234-36 <www.literaryendeavour.org> [accessed 12 January 2022]

Bhabha, Homi, 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse', *The MIT Press*, 28 (1984), 125-133 <Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse on JSTOR> [accessed 30 April 2021]

Boehmer, Elleke, *Stories of Women: Gender and Narrative in Post-colonial Nation* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2005)

_____, 'Stories of Women and Mothers: Gender and Nationalism in the Early Fiction of Flora Nwapa', in *Stories of Women: Gender and Narrative in Post-colonial Nation* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2005)

Brown, Carolyn A, 'A Man in the Village Is A Boy in The Workplace: Colonial Racism, Worker Militance, And Igbo Notions Of Masculinity in The Nigerian Coal Industry, 1930-1945', in *Men And Masculinities in Modern Africa*, ed. by Lindsay, Lisa A., And Stephan F. Miescher (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2003), pp. 157-74

Brown, Wesley, *Women Writers in Black Africa* (London: Greenwood Press, 1981)

Bryson, Devin, 'The Submitted Body: Discursive and Masochistic Transformations of Masculinity in Simon Njami's *African Gigolo*', *Research in African Literatures*, 39.4 (2008), 84-104

Burney, Tayla, Politics and Prose (2018).

Butler, Judith, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York; London: Routledge, 1990)

Chidi, Ikonne, 'African Literature in Africa Twenty-Five Years After the Dakar and Freetown Conferences', in *African Literature, 1988: New Masks*, ed. by Hal Wylie, Dennis Brutus, and Juris Silenieks (Washington DC: Three Continents, 1990), pp. 97-105

_____, 'The Society and Woman's Quest for Selfhood in Flora Nwapa's Early Novels (1984)', *Kunapipi*, 6.1, (1984), 68-78

Christensen, Maya Mynster, and others, *African Conflicts and Informal Power: Big Men and Networks* (London: Zed Books, 2012)

Cleaver, Eldridge, *Soul on Ice* (London: The Chaucer Press, 1969)

Collins, Patricia Hill, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (London; New York: Routledge, 1991)

Comaroff, Jean, and John Comaroff, eds, 'Introduction', in *Modernity and Its Malcontents: Ritual and Power in Postcolonial Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. xi-xxxvii

Connell, Robert W., and James W. Messerschmidt, 'Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept', *Gender and Society*, 19.6 (2005), 829-59 <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0891243205278639>

Connell, Robert W., *Masculinities*, 2nd eds (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005)

Cornwall, Andrea, and Nancy Lindisfarne, eds., *Dislocating Masculinity: Comparative Ethnographies* (London: Routledge, 1994)

Cuddon, John Anthony, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary* Theory (London: Penguin, 1999)

D'Souza, Florence, 'Contemporary Portrayals of Women by Women: Comparing India and Ghana', *Limina*, 18 (2012), 1-10

Da Silva, Meyre Ivone Santana, 'Narratives of Desire: Gender And Sexuality In Bugul, Aidoo and Chiziane', unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oregon, 2013

Daloz, Jean-Pascal, "'Big Men" in Sub-Saharan Africa: How Elites Accumulate Positions and Resources'**,** *Comparative Sociology*, *2*.1 (2005), 271-85 <https://doi.org/10.1163/156913303100418681>

Darko, Ama, *Not Without Flowers* (Legon: African Books Collective, 2007)

Davies, Carole Boyce, 'Maidens, Mistresses and Matrons: Feminine Images in Selected Soyinka Works', in *Ngambika: Studies of Women in African Literature*, ed. by Davies, Carole Boyce, and Anne Adams Graves (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1986), pp. 75-88

Dowd, Nancy. E, *Man Question: Male Subordination and Privilege* (New York: New York University Press, 2010)

Dzokoto, Vivian, and Glenn Adams, 'Analysing Ghanaian Emotions Through Narrative: A Textual Analysis of Ama Ata Aidoo's Novel *Changes*', Journal *of Black Psychology*. 33.1 (2007), 94-112 <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0095798406295097>

Echeruo, Michael J. C, 'Negritude and History: Senghor's Argument with Frobenius', *Research in African Literatures* 24.4 (1993), 1–13

Egejuru, Phanuel Akubueze, *Towards African literary independence* (Westport, CN: Greenwood, 1980)

_____ 'African Literature in Africa Twenty-Five Years After the Dakar and Freetown Conferences', in *African Literature,* ed. by Wylie Hal, Dennis Brutus, and Juris Silenieks (Washington DC: Three Continents, 1990), pp. 97-105

Emecheta, Buchi, *The Joys of Motherhood* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1994)

Emenyonu, Ernest N, and Patricia T Emenyonu, *New Women's Writing in African Literature: A Review* (Oxford/Trenton, New Jersey: James Currey/Africa World Press, 2004)

Emenyonu, Ernest N., 'Technique and Language in Buchi Emecheta's The Bride Price, The Slave Girl and The Joys of Motherhood', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 23.1, (1988), 130-141

Ennin, Theresah P., 'Aidoo's Men: Subverting Traditional Masculinity in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes: A Love Story*', *West Africa Review*, 20 (2012), 55–68

Fanon, Frantz, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. by Richard Philcox (New York: Grove, 2008)

_____, *Les Damnes de la terre* (Paris, 1961)

_____, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. by C. Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1986 [1963])

Foucault, Michel, *Discipline and Punish:* **: *The birth of the prison,*** trans. by Alan Sheridan (London, UK : Penguin Books, 2020)

Frank, Katherine, 'Women Without Men: The Feminist Novel in Africa', *African Literature Today*, 15 (1987), 14-34

George, Rosemary Marangoly and Helen Scott, 'An Interview with Tsitsi Dangarembga', *Novel; A Forum On Fiction*, Duke University Press, 26.3 (1993) 309-319

Gilman, Sander L., *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985)

Gleibermann, Erik, 'Nigerian Fiction Reenvisions the Masculine', *World Literature Today*, 94.2 (2020), 36-40

Goniwe, Thembinkosi, and Pumla Dineo Gqola, 'A Neglected Heritage: Aesthetics of Complex Black Masculinities'. *Agenda* 19. 63 (2005) p. 80-94

Gwendolyn, Etter-Lewis, 'Dark Bodies/White Masks: African Masculinities and Visual Culture in *Graceland*, *The Joys of Motherhood* and *Things Fall Apart*', in *Masculinities in African Literary and Cultural Texts*, ed. by Helen Nabasuta Mugambi and Tuzyline Jita Allan (Banbury: Ayebia Clarke, 2010), pp. 160-77

Haverkate, Henk, 'A speech act analysis of irony', *Journal of Pragmatics* 14(1), (1990) 77-109.

Helaly, Mohamed Fathi, 'Cultural Collision and Women Victimization in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*', *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, 5.2 (2016), 117-27 <http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.5n.2p.117>

Hitchcott, Nicki, *Women Writers in Francophone Africa* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2000)

Hobbs, Alex, 'Masculinity Studies and Literature', *Literature Compass*, 10.4 (2013) 383–395 https://doi.org/10.1111/lic3.12057

Hooks, Bell, 'Doing It For Daddy', in *Constructing Masculinities*, ed. by Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis, and Simon Watson (New York: Routledge, 1995), p.p 98-106

Horne, Naana Banyiwa, 'Sexual Impotence as Metonymy for Political Failure: Interrogating Ama Ata Aidoo's Anowa', in *Masculinities in African Literary and Cultural Texts*, ed. by Helen Nabasuta Mugambi and Tuzyline Jita Allan (Oxfordshire, UK: Ayebia Clarke, 2010), pp. 178-199

Irele Abiola, 'Negritude—literature and ideology, *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 3.4 (1965), p. 499-526

James, Adeola, ed., *In Their Own Voices: African women writers talk (*London: James Currey; Portsmouth: N.H., Heinemann, 1990)

Joey, A.V, 'Mapping Out 'Self': A Reading Of Scarlet Song Conforming To Josselson's Theory Of Women's Identity Development', *Research Journal of English Language and Literature*, 4.2 (2016), 202-09 <202-209 A.V. JOEY.pdf (rjelal.com)> [16 December 2016]

Kesteloot, Lilyan, 'Senghor, Negritude and Francophonie on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century', *Research in African Literatures,* 21.3 (1990), 51-58 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3819633> [accessed 28 April 2021]

Kimmel, Michael S., 'Invisible Masculinity', *Society*, 30.6 (1993), 28-35

Kimmel, Michael S., Robert. W Connell, and Jeff Hearn, eds, 'Introduction' in *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities* (London: Sage, 2005), pp. 1-12

Kipnis, Laura, Adultery', *Critical Inquiry* 24 (1998), 289-327

Kurtz, Roger J., ed., 'Introduction', in *Trauma and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 1-18 <https://doi-org.liverpool.idm.oclc.org/10.1017/9781316817155>

Lucariello, Joan, "Situational irony: A concept of events gone awry", *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 123.2 (1994) p. 129.

Legum, Colin, *Pan-Africanism a Short Political Guide* (London, 1965)

Lewis, Michael, 'Self-Conscious Emotions: Embarrassment, Pride, Shame, and Guilt', in *Handbook of Emotions*, 3rd, ed. by Michael Lewis, Jeannette M. Haviland-Jones, and Lisa Feldman Barrett (New York, 2008), p. 742-756

Lipman-Blumen, Jean, 'Toward a Homosocial Theory of Sex Roles An Explanation of the Sex Segregation of Social Institutions', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 1.3 (1976) 15-31

Little, Roger, 'Seeds of Postcolonialism: Black Slavery and Cultural Difference to 1800', in *Francophone Postcolonial Studies*, ed. by Charles Forsdick and David Murphy (London: Arnold, 2003), pp. 17-26

Lothe, Jakob, *Narrative in Fiction and Film: An Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000)

MacInnes, John, *The End of Masculinity: The Confusion of Sexual Genesis and Sexual Difference in Modern Society* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1998)

Marangoly, George Rosemary, and Helen Scott, 'An Interview with Tsitsi Dangarembga', *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, 26.3 (1993), 309–19 <https://doi.org/10.2307/1345839>

McWilliams, Sally, 'Strange as it may seem: African Feminism in Two Novels by Ama Ata Aidoo', in *Emerging Perspectives on Ama Ata Aidoo*, ed. Ada Uzoamaka Azodo and Gay Wilentz (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1999), pp. 333-61

Mears, Mary D., 'Choice and discovery: An analysis of women and culture in Flora Nwapa's fiction', (doctoral thesis, University of South Florida, 2009)

Messerschmidt, James. W, 'Becoming "real men": Adolescent masculinity challenges and sexual violence', *Men and Masculinities*, 2.3 (2000), 286-307 <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1097184X00002003003>

Metz, Helen Chapin, ed., *Nigeria: A Country Study* (Washington DC: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1992)

Miescher, Stephan F., and Lisa Lindsay, 'Introduction', in *Men and Masculinities in Modern African History*, ed. by Lisa A. Lindsay & Stephan F. Miescher (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003), pp. 1-30

Miescher, Stephan F., and Lisa Lindsay, ed., *Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003)

_____, 'Introduction', in *Men and Masculinities in Modern African History*, ed. by Stephan F. Miescher and Lisa A. Lindsay (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003), pp. 1-30

Miller, Jane, 'Introduction', *Women Writing About Men* (London: Virago Press, 1986) p.p 1-9

Mojola, Ibeyemi Yemi, 'The Onus of Womanhood: Mariama Bâ and Zaynab Alkali', in Writing *African Women: Gender, Popular Culture and Literature in West Africa*, ed. by Stephanie Newell (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1997), pp. 126-36

_____, 'The Works of Flora Nwapa', in *Nigerian Female Writers: A Critical Perspective,* ed. by H. Otokunefor and O. Nwodo (Lagos: Malthouse Press, 1989), p. 10-29

Morrell, Robert (ed.), *Changing Men in Southern Africa* (London: Zed Books, 2001)

Morrell, Robert, 'Of Boys and Men: Masculinity and Gender in Southern African Studies', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 24.4 (1998) 605–30 <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057079808708593>

Morrell, Robert, and Lahoucine Ouzgane, ed., 'African Masculinities: An Introduction', in *African Masculinities: Men in Africa from the Late Nineteenth Century to the Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 1-20

Muckere, Douglas Colin, *Irony And The Ironic* (New York: Methuen, 1970) p. 92.

Mule, Katwiwa, 'Women's Spaces, Women's Visions: Politics, Poetics and Resistance', in *African Women's Vision* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2007), pp. 141-146

Mutunda, Sylvester, 'Through A Female Lens: Aspects of Masculinity in Francophone African Women's', (doctoral thesis, University of Arizona, 2009), <*http://hdl.handle.net/10150/194161*> [accessed 6-Jul-2017]

Narayan, Uma, *Dislocating Cultures/ Identities, Traditions, and Third World Feminism* (New York: Routledge, 2013)

Newell, Stephanie, *West African Literatures: Ways of Reading* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006)

_____, 'Feminism and the Complex Space of Women's Writing', in *West African Literatures: Ways of Reading* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 136-158

Nfah-Abbenyi, Juliana Makuchi, 'Introduction', in *Gender in African Women's Writing: Identity, Sexuality, and Difference* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), pp.1-15

Ngoh, Sarah Elizabeth, 'Gendering Men: Masculinities, Nationalisms, and Post-Independence African Literature', unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Kansas, 2016) <http://hdl.handle.net/1808/24196> [accessed 07 October 2017]

Nnoromele, Salome C., 'Representing the African Woman: Subjectivity and Self in *The Joys of Motherhood*', *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, 43.2 (2002), 178-90 <https://doi.org/10.1080/00111610209602179>

Nwankwo, Chimalum, 'The Igbo Word in Flora Nwapa's Craft', *Research in African Literatures*, 26.2 (1995), 42-52

Nwapa, Flora, *Efuru* (London: Heinemann, 1966)

_____, *Idu* (London, Heinemann, 1970)

_____, *Women Are Different* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1992)

Odamtten, Vincent O., *The Art of Ama Ata Aidoo: Polylectics and Reading Against NeoColonialism* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994)

Ogunyeme, Chikwenye Okonjo, 'The Joys of Motherhood and the Throes of Fatherhood', in *Africa, Wo/Man, Palava: The Nigerian Novel by Women*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 254-261

_____, 'Flora Nwapa: Genesis and Matrix', in *Africa, Wo/Man, Palava: The Nigerian Novel by Women*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 131-181

Olaniyan, Tejumola and Ato Quayson, 'Women and Creative Writing in Africa: Flora Nwapa' in *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism And Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell publishing, 2007) p. 526-532

Olga Kenyon, *Writing Women* (London: Pluto Press, 1991)

Olney, James, *Tell Me Africa: An Approach to African Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973)

Oso, Olusola, 'The Treatment of Patriarchy in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* and Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come', Studies in Literature and Language* 15.3 (2017), 1-8 <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/sll/article/view/9859> [accessed 14 January 2018]

Ouzgane, Lahoucine, 'The Rape Continuum: Masculinities in The Works of Nawal Alsaadawi and Ben Jelloun', in *Men in African Film and Fiction* (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2011), pp. 68-80

Ouzgane, Lahoucine, ed., *Men in African Film and Fiction* (University of Alberta, Canada: Boydell & Brewer, 2011)

Oyefara, John Lekan, 'Polygyny, Marital Stability and Fertility Patterns in Southwestern Nigeria', *Ibadan Journal of the Social Sciences,* 6.1 (2008), 1-10

Oyewale, Philip Bukola, 'A Critical Analysis of Marital Instability among Yoruba Christian Couples in the North West of England', (doctoral thesis, University of Liverpool, 2016), p. 127 <A Critical Analysis of Marital Instability Among Yoruba Christian Couples in the North West of England - ProQuest> [accessed 13 July 2017]

Owomoyela, Oyekan, 'The question of language in African literatures', in *A History of Twentieth-Century Literatures* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1993)

Palmer, Eustace, 'Elechi Amadi, The Concubine and Flora Nwapa, Efuru', *African Literature Today,* 1 (1969), 56-8

Perry, Alison. 'Meeting Flora Nwapa', *West Africa,* 18 (1984)

Rathinabai, R. Jothi, 'Modern Women in Aidoo's *Changes: A Love Story* Esi and Opokuya', *Language in India,* 18.1 (2018), 469-482 <rathinabainovelchangesaidoo.pdf (languageinindia.com)> [accessed 2 February 2019]

Reeser, Todd W., *Masculinities in Theory: An Introduction* (Chichester: UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 12-35

Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004)

Roger, J., Kreuz, and Richard M. Roberts, 'On satire and parody: The importance of being ironic', *Metaphor and symbolic activity* (8), (1993) pp. 97-109

Said, Edward, *Orienltalism,* (New York Vintage Books, 1979), p. 3

Salafia, Susanna Iacona, 'The "Bigmanism" or the ''Big Man Syndrome" As an Optical Lens to Understand African "Democracies" – A "Case Study" in Zimbabwe', Proceedings of the INTCESS14–International Conference on Education and Social Sciences, 3-5 February 2014 (Istanbul: Fatih University, 2014), pp. 601-610 <239.pdf (ocerints.org)> [accessed 10 July 2020]

Schipper, Mineke, 'Mother Africa on the pedestal: the male heritage in African literature and criticism', *African Literature Today*, 15 (1987) 35-54 <view (universiteitleiden.nl)> [accessed 21 April 2021]

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York, 1985)

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, and Adam Frank, *Touching Feeling: Pedagogy, Performativity, Affect* (Durham, NC, and London, 2003).

Senghor, Léopold Sédar, *Selected Poems/Poésies Choisies*, trans. by Craig Williamson (London: Rex Collings, 1976)

Shoyenin, Lola, *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* (Abuja: Cassava Republic Press, 2010)

Smith, Sophie Catherine, 'Negotiations of masculinity in Francophone men's writing', (doctoral thesis, Swansea University, 2009) <http://cronfa.swan.ac.uk/Record/cronfa43153> [accessed 7 October 2017]

Smith, Theodate L., 'Notes on the Psychology of Emotion', *The American Journal of Psychology*, 26.2 (1915), 229-235 <https://doi.org/10.2307/1413252>

Stanzel, Franz. K, 'Teller-characters and reflector-characters in narrative theory', *Poetics Today*, 2 (1981), 5-15 <https://doi.org/10.2307/1772187>

Storr, Merl, *Latex and Lingerie: Shopping for Pleasure at Ann Summers Parties* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2003), pp. 39-46

Stratton, Florence, *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender* (London: Taylor & Francis 1994)

Teiko, Nii Okain, 'Changing Conceptions of Masculinity in the Marital Landscape of Africa: A Study of Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes* and Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*', *Matatu* 49.2 (2017), 329-57 <Changing Conceptions of Masculinity in the Marital Landscape of Africa in: Matatu Volume 49 Issue 2 (2017) (brill.com)> [accessed 10 April 2018]

Tissières, Hélène, and Marjolijn de Jager, 'Maghreb-sub-Saharan connections', *Research in African Literatures*, 33.3 (2002), 32-54 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3820681> [accessed 20 September 2021]

Todorov, Tzvetan, *Introduction to Poetics*, trans. by Richard Howard (Brighton: Harvester, 1981)

Treiber, Jeanette, 'Feminism and Identity Politics: Mariama Bâ's *Un chant Écarlate*', *Research in African Literatures*, 27.4 (1996), 109-23

Trouwborst, Albert A., 'The "Big-Man": A Melanesian Model in Africa', in *Private Politics: A Multi- Disciplinary Approach to Big Man Systems*, vol 1, ed. by Martin A. Van Bakei, Renée Hagesteijn, R., and Pieter van de Velde (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986), pp. 50-56

Uchendu, Victor C, *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965)

Uko, Iniobong I., 'Womanhood, Sexuality, And Work: The Dialectic of Exploitation (Flora Nwapa, Nawal El Saadawi, And Ama Ata Aidoo)', in *Tradition and Change in Contemporary West and East African Fiction*, ed. by Ogaga Okuyade (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2014), pp. 1-20

Uwakweh, Pauline, 'Debunking Patriarchy: The Liberational Quality of Voicing in Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions', *Research in African Literatures* 17.1 (1995), 75-84

Walker, Alice, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*. (San Diego, CA: Harcourt, 1983)

Wandia, Njoya, 'On Mariama Bâ's Novels, Stereotypes, and Silence'**,** *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 27.2 (2007), 450-62

Webb, Russell E., and Judith C. Daniluk, 'The End of the Line: Infertile Men's Experience of Being Unable to Produce A Child', *Men and Masculinities*, 2.1 (1999), 6-25 <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1097184X99002001002>

Whitehead, Stephen M., and Frank J. Barrett, 'The Sociology of Masculinity', in *The Masculinities Reader*, ed. by Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), pp. 1-26

Wilentz, Gay, *Binding Cultures: Black Women Writers in Africa and the Diaspora* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992)

_____,'Flora Nwapa, 1931-93', *The Women's Review of Books*, 11.6 (1994), pp. 8-8

Wilson, Jean, 'Representations of Female Experience in The Novels Of Post-Colonial West African Writers: Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, And Mariama Bâ', unpublished doctoral thesis, University of *Wollongong* 1997) <"Representations of female experience in the novels of post-colonial We" by Jean Wilson (uow.edu.au)> [accessed 09 September 2017]

Wolfsdorf, David, 'The Irony of Socrates', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 65.2 (2007), Irony of Socrates | The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism | Oxford Academic (oup.com)

Woodhull, Winifred, *Transfigurations of the Maghreb: Feminism, Decolonization, and Literatures* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993)

Wynne-Davies, Marion, *Margaret Atwood*, ed by Isobel Armstrong (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009)

Young, Robert. J.C, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995)

Zulfiqar Chaudhry, Sadia, 'African Women Writers and the Politics of Gender (2014)' (doctoral thesis, University of Glasgow, 2014) <http://theses.gla.ac.uk/5202> [accessed 26 July 2017]