

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF LANGUAGE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES
AND LITERATURE
(GRADUATE PROGRAMME)**

**FEMINISM IN ACHEBE'S AND GORDIMER'S
NOVELS**

DANIEL TENKIR

June, 2018

FEMINISM IN ACHEBE'S AND GORDIMER'S NOVELS

By

DANIEL TENKIR

**A Thesis Proposal Presented to
The Department of Foreign Languages and Literature
(Graduate Programme)**

**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Art in Literature**

June, 2018

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF LANGUAGE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES
AND LITERATURE**

**FEMINISM IN ACHEBE'S AND GORDIMER'S
NOVELS**

By

DANIEL TENKIR

Approved by Examining Board:

Advisor

Dr. Abiye Daniel

Examiner

Dr. Melakneh (Asst. Prof)

Examiner

Dr. Birhanu Mathewos

Acknowledgments

First and foremost I would like to thank my adviser, Dr. Abiye Daniel, who gave me constructive comments and guidance to make this study possible.

Moreover my heart-felt-thanks go to my family who supported me during my work. And also I would like to say thank you for my friend, Biniyam Tarekegn for his support.

Table of Contents

Contents	Pages
Acknowledgment	i
Table of Contents	ii
Abstract	iv
CHAPTER ONE	
INTRODUCTION	
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Background to the Study	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem	3
1.3 Objective of the Study	6
1.4 Significance of the Study.....	7
1.5 Scope of the Study	7
1.6 Limitation of the Study	8
1.7 Methodology of the Study	8
CHAPTER TWO	
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	
2. Review of Related Literature	10
2.1 Defining Feminism and Feminist Literary Criticism	10
2.2 Multicultural Feminism	14
2.2.1 Marxist Feminism	15
2.2.2 Liberal Feminism	18
2.2.3 Radical Feminism	19
2.3 Postcolonial Condition and Feminism	20
2.4 Traditional Gender Roles in Africa	23
2.5 African Male Writers and Representation of Women	25

CHAPTER THREE

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

3.1 A Marxist Feminist Criticism of Achebe's and Gordimer's Novels.....	28
3.1.1 Female Character as passive and victim of the social class in <i>No Longer At Ease</i>	28
3.1.2 Female Character as Powerful and Socially Responsible in <i>None To Accompany Me</i>	33
3.1.3 Comparative analysis of three major women characters in the selected novels.....	38

CHAPTER FOUR

Summary and Conclusion	46
------------------------------	----

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abstract

This research aims at analyzing and comparing women characters in the novels of Chinua Achebe and Nadine Gordimer. It tries to explore the feminist outlook of the writers taking the portrayal of female characters. And also it uncovers the development of these female portrayals in the selected novels. And finally the research examines the role of female characters in their given society and in the given period.

The thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter, introduction, tries to deal about the background of the study and its significances and objectives. The second chapter is Review of Related Literature. It starts by defining important terms like feminism and attempts to give some highlights on women in line with the aim of the research.

The third chapter is Analysis and interpretation women of the selected novels. The analysis tries to find out how the feminist outlook of the writers outshine women in those novels. In addition to this, it proves whether the writers portray the female characters in the same way or differently. The study attempts to give comparative analysis of the female characters of the three novels.

The fourth chapter is summary and conclusion based on the analysis of the research. The conclusion recapitulates the core findings in a nutshell.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Recent trends seem to suggest that literary theory itself grows and develops in a process of comparison and cross-referencing. This is to say that new schools of theories and thoughts have been modifying from time to time with new ideas. Feminist literary criticism is the application of the theory of feminism to the analysis of literary texts. It came into existence recently after the change in culture of families to express ideas about it through poetry. This created an atmosphere of both personal freedom of expression and collective response that accommodate women's needs and aspirations for poetry. Though the development of this theory or literary criticism has been set or known as 'feminism' since recently, women have been protesting against gender biased inequalities historically long before.

Feminism as a movement appears barely before the nineteenth century. In fact, no record exists of the use of the word before 1850. But discussion of the woman question, however, begins long before 1800. (Cherry, 1978:1).

This implies that protest against patriarchy (sexist discrimination) in the traditional society is not new; it has been there for ages. However, the belief that men are superior to women has been used, feminists have observed to justify and maintain the male monopoly of positions in politics, social power, economy and others is recent. Feminists argue that the inferior position long occupied by women in the patriarchal society has been culturally, not biologically set.

The connections between feminism and literature are deep and abiding and begin in our consciousness about our lives (Ibid:7). Obviously, literature is one of the common ways that can propagate gender issues. Cheryl argues concerning this.

We also hope that the anthology will raise a few consciousnesses along the way because we all could benefit from becoming more sensitive to the women's movement, more sensitive to literature, and more sensitive to ourselves as the movement and literature affect our daily life. (XIII).

As can be inferred from here, it is useful to examine the ways in which literary texts reinforce gender issues or gender inequality. This is because it is important to know the ability to see when and how gender roles operate in literary works as these works reflect the society's way of living and habits in general. As a result of this, we can minimize the problem in our own life.

Many African writers have tried to uncover the traditional gender hierarchies in their creative writings. They have included the issues about the relationship between husband and wife, father and children and mother and children. A number of writers like Cyprian Ekwensi, Ousmane Sembene, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Alex La Guma, Peter Abraham, and then Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, Grace Ogot, Bessie Head provide most of the background material for the discussion and analysis of the African female experience in fiction. Their works concern with the socio-cultural perception of women and the dominant factors that encourage problems or crises in their lives.

Moreover, writers like Agovi, K.E. *A Dual sensibility* (1990), Aidoo, A.A. *Our sister killjoy* (1977), Amadi, E. *The concubine* (1966) and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) have also treated the representation of women in their respected culture. Africans writings reacting to and attempting to correct these distortions omitted and silenced women's histories. The influence of established male and female writers in Africa and Europe is also significant to minimize the oppression. Particularly, female writers in the post-colonial period have strengthened their struggle in line of the notion of feminism. Male postcolonial writers, like Achebe is also believed to be handled gender issue in his novels.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

It is believed to be women are the bulwark of a society. Undoubtedly, their contribution to the overall development of mankind and nature in general is great. Starting from raising children at home and other routine works of the family up to the country's top leadership, they are as important as men. This is because they are considered as significant part of the society. Unlike this fact, women have been marginalized from their own respected culture for ages. Traditional gender roles cast men as rational, strong, protective and decisive. In contrast, women are presented as emotional (irrational), weak, and submissive.

Even though people today believe that these inequalities are minimized because of some anti-discriminatory laws passed by governments, these laws may not be implemented properly unless the traditional society brings a behavioral change. Gerdalerner as quoted in Lodge (1988: 345) explains:

Women have been left out of history not because of the evil conspiracies of men in general or male historians in particular, but because we have considered history only in male centered terms. We have missed women and their activities, because we have asked questions of history which are inappropriate to women.

This implies that women's roles have been marginalized due to the patriarchal (sexist) beliefs of the traditional society. The belief that men are superior to women economically, politically and socially has been imposed in the traditional society. It is this male dominant culture that initiated feminists to develop feminist criticism to reflect and expose the deep-rooted biased culture. Feminists' assumption is that women are oppressed by patriarchy economically, politically, socially and psychologically.

Gender issues play a part in every aspect of human experience, including the production and experience of literature whether we are consciously aware of

these issues or not. As feminist critics reread male texts, they describe how women in those texts are considered in culture and society. African writers also share this issue as their major lesson in their works.

Based on the above facts, it is convincing and timely to make a study to analyze the portrayal of women character in the Achebe's post colonial and Gordimer's post apartheid novels. Namely: *No Longer At Ease* [1960] and *None to Accompany Me* (1994). The reason for choosing such a topic is to show the representation of women characters in post-colonial and post-apartheid works of African Male and Female writers. A critical analysis of the portrayal of female characters in noteworthy novels is needed in so far as it can highlight significant ways in which women are seen in this transforming society. This dissertation can contribute meaningfully to a critique of the depiction of women in post-colonial Nigeria and post-apartheid South Africa and highlight the social need for greater awareness of the effects of depictions of women on social conduct and within the larger social dispensation. Consequently, as an academic contribution, it can assist in addressing and assessing behaviour towards women, and conceptions of their individual and social worth, in a society where appalling violence and discrimination against women are unfortunately are still prevalent.

It is also important to examine the feminist outlook of the writers in the portrayal of women characters. Thus, the study is expected to examine and answer the following questions:-

1. To identify how fairly women are represented in their works?
2. To what extent Achebe and Gordimer attempt to advance the social roles of female characters in their novels?
3. How female are characterized and portrayed in the novels as they are reflections of their respective society in the given periods?

Based on the changes in characterization of each novel, it will be suggested about the writers' outlook on feminism in the given periods. In describing

literary feminism of these novels, the researcher shall concentrate on such matters as female characterization and their position in their period rather than on the intention of the author, a far more complex problem. The study reflects the gender issue of Nigeria and South Africa in particular and most of Africans in general.

1.3 Objective of the Study

As it is tried to indicate in the statement of the problem, the main objective of this study is to investigate and analyze the novels of Chinua Achebe and Nadine Gordimer in their portrayal of women characters. The study has been narrowed to two authors in order to avoid ambiguity. Based upon the analysis, an effort will be made to investigate how women characters are treated in these novels as they are the reflection of the culture they live in. To achieve this general objective, the analysis intended to:-

1. Determine females' position in political power, social roles and cultural roles as depicted in the novels.
2. Identify if there is any change or advancement of females' social roles in the selected novels as these literary works are representatives of the given society.
3. Show the extent of females roles and their portrayals in their times.
4. Uncover the attitude of male characters towards feminist ideology and female characters.
5. Show gender inequalities in power, acceptance and roles in that particular culture and time in the given novels. And these clues can lead to show the development of the writer's feminist ideology through time if there is a clear change in perspective.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research traces to examine how the authors magnified the role of female characters in their novels. As a result of this, other researchers can make further studies on similar issues. As the research tries to identify how women

are marginalized, discriminated, and characterized as weak or strong in a given culture, the research is hoped to contribute its own share to the general knowledge to other related studies. By analyzing the novels of Achebe and Gordimer, it can be suggested a useful ideas concerning how to improve the wrong perception about women in the whole society. With the assumption of all these general advantages of the study, it is expected to have the following specific significances:-

1. The study can help to understand the realities of the periods where the novels set and relate the development of the society on gender related issues. This can help to understand the condition of African women in particular and the world in general in their respective society and time.
2. The study can also contribute its own share to inform scholars about the perception of traditional and modern society on the role of women in the overall activities of their social group and the society in general.
3. Additionally, it is vital to show the role of writers to reflect their societal problems.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The focus of this study is on critical analysis of the selected two novels. It does not include other works of the authors. In addition to this, the study will focus only on gender issue rather than the main theme of the novels. Themes may help in evaluating the roles of female characters; however, the study doesn't discuss theme as major issue.

Female characters will be evaluated and interpreted according to their roles in the socio-economic and political context of the society. The aim of the research is not to investigate the general cultural outlook of the societies of the country in general and the texts in particular: Yet, women characters may be analyzed as they are victims or beneficiaries of their respective culture.

1.6 Limitation of the Study

As any research is not complete by itself in all aspects, this study may also face some limitations. The expected limitation of this study is interview with the authors. It could be better to help the study with interview to make it more effective; since the authors are not alive or reachable, interview will not be made.

Unless the study is focused on the linguistic items given in the listed novels, it is difficult to base on the writers' intention and other factors. Needless to say, some technical words and expressions may be difficult to interpret and this may affect the analysis negatively

1.7 Methods of the Study

Since the study is unable to use instruments like interview and questionnaire, it is limited to textual analysis of the selected novels. It uses descriptive analysis to achieve its objective. Texts will be taken from the two novels for interpretation and for comparing the female characters of the writers in that particular novels and time as well.

Representation of women in politics, economy and social involvements will be analyzed to prove the gender ideology of the novels in Nigeria and South Africa in particular and the continent in general.

The research contains four chapters. Chapter one is introduction which contains: background of the study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, significance of the study, scope of the study, limitation of the study and methods of the study. The second chapter includes definition of important terms and attempt to review the nature and development of women characters. The next chapter is Analysis of the quoted texts or linguistic items. This covers quoting and interpreting of the two novels. The last chapter is summary and conclusion based on the analysis.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 Definition of Feminism and Feminist Literary Criticism

The term “feminism” is derived from the Latin word femina which means women, having a quality of females. In 1890, feminism was coined for the first time instead of Womanism. Womanism is made from wifman, which is related to the theory of sexual equality and the movement for women's right.

Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary defines feminism as the belief that women should be allowed the same rights, power, and opportunities as men and be treated in the same way, or the set of activities intended to achieve this state.

Despite of the painful segregation and the hard inequality, women were able to stand up each time and they were able to speak and express their problems, feelings and wishes. In addition, women were able to spread it in all over the world, make it a symbol of equality, and make all people believe that men and women deserve equality in all opportunities, treatments, respect and social rights.

The rise of feminism is undeniably one of the major events in the development of literary criticism. Feminist approaches have pushed forward both the theory of literary criticisms and the understanding of individual works of literature. Hogan (2000) says:

... feminism is probably the most important influence on social and political literary study in the last half century. Feminist political activism, feminist literature, feminist theories and analyses, have radically altered the way in which many of us think about society and about literature. (167).

It is believed that feminism as a movement increases awareness in all aspects of life. According to Hagan, due to feminist works, the questions we ask about literature, the literary works we read, are very different today from what they were fifty years ago. Therefore, it seems crucial to include feminism in the social and political philosophy.

Feminism, however, exists in a rich diversity of forms, reflecting a complex historical development. This has been especially important as feminists try more and more to examine the experience of women from all races and classes and cultures, including, for example, black, Hispanic, Asian, Lesbian, handicapped, elderly and Third World Women Guerin, (1992:183). Kolodny as quoted in Guerin, (1992:183) describes: "... this richness as a "playful pluralism," for it exhibits liberal tolerance, interdisciplinary links, and an insistence on connecting art to the diversities of life."

Waugh (1989:143) also says concerning the diversity of feminism as:

Perhaps more than any other mode of criticism, feminist theory has cut across and drawn on multiple and contradictory traditions while presenting what is arguably one of the most fundamental challenges to previous critical orthodoxies in its revaluation of subjectivity and the category of 'experience'.

Here, it shows feminism's plural nature with many different varieties of theories. According to Michael, although many different types of feminisms are collected under the generalized heading of feminism, they can be divided loosely into broad trends with distinct philosophical approaches:

1. Feminisms that primarily aim for women to achieve equal status with men within existing social structures; and
2. Feminisms that reject the possibility of women's achieving total emancipation under existing social structures and, therefore, seek to dismantle and restructure the social system.

Though Michael tries to narrow the plural form of feminism into the above two types of feminisms, they don't contradict each other; rather they both try to expose and uncover the traditional and patriarchal oppression of women.

They differ in their specific aims and strategies to show this gender hierarchy. Hogan (2000:170) says:

Virtually all feminists agree that women should not be underpaid relative to men, and thus they support equal pay for equal work.... Similarly, feminists universally or nearly universally oppose preferential hiring or promotion for men based on sex. They also oppose the unequal division of housework between men and women, at least when the spouses work the same amount of time outside of the home.

Feminist literary theory is a complex, dynamic area of study that draws from a wide range of critical theories. Although feminist literary theory is often described simply as the use of feminist principles and techniques to analyze the textual constructions of gendered meaning, "feminists' definitions of gender and of feminism have undergone a number of significant alterations since the early 1970s." Based on this already existed assumption and applying in a new ways, feminist literary theory has been increasing in a diversified directions or branches. Despite this diversify; most feminist literary theorists share several assumptions. The first and most important issue is that they generally agree on hierarchal ordered male-female gender relations impact all aspect of human social existence.

It is better to define feminism, or feminist literary criticism according to its objective. Writers, like Patrick says that feminist literary criticism is the term for critizing literary works through the examination of female point of view, concerns, and values. According to him, feminist literary criticism encompasses not only female literary works but also male literary works, leaving men to be held accountable for their portrayal of women as well as men in their literary

works. Others define feminism as a collection of social theories, political movements, and moral philosophies largely motivated by or concerned with the liberation of women from subordination to men.

The question how are women portrayed in works of art and literature brings different feminists into a common point. It can be broadly defined: "feminist criticism examines the ways in which literature (and other cultural productions) reinforce or undermine the economic, political, social and psychological oppression of women" Tyson (1999:83).

Guerin, Wilfred L., Labor (1992) summarizes feminism as:

... feminism is concerned with difference and marginalization of women. Feminists believe that our culture is a patriarchal culture, that is, one organized in favor of the interest of men. Feminist literary critics try to explain how what they term engendered power imbalances in a given culture are reflected, supported, or challenged by literary texts. (182).

Feminist literary criticism, according to him, is a political manifestation against the absence of women in socially meaningful spaces and social hierarchies. Therefore, since most feminist social movements promote women's rights, interests and issues, feminist literary criticism, then, is a specific kind of political discourse. It is a critical and theoretical practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism. Thus, Feminist Literary Criticism is the term for criticizing literary works through the examination of female points of view, concerns, and values regardless of the sex of the critique.

A brief and general working definition of feminism, without erasing the difference between the various feminisms it encompasses, is summarized by Michael as follows:

... it is a political and critical stance that focuses on the sexual and gender biases inherent to society and its cultural products and on the

social construction of gendered beings and of sexuality. It aims to expose the ways in which Western male-centered culture works in order to retain its power, to subvert those means and challenge the very structure of society, and ultimately to offer blueprints for a restructured and new society. (1996:23).

This implies that feminism is a movement that rejects the possibility of women's achieving total emancipation under existing social structure and therefore seeks to dismantle and restructure the social system. Its primary aim is to achieve women's equal status with men within the existing social structures. In general, feminism is grounded on a struggle to expose and counter the traditional oppression of women.

2.1.2 Multicultural Feminism

As it is mentioned above, feminism exists in a rich diversity of forms, reflecting a complex historical development. According to Guerin (1992:83), this diversity has been especially important as feminists try more and more to examine the experiences of women from all races, classes and cultures. Though all are concerned with analyzing gender inequality and promotion of women's rights, interests and issues, there are many more feminist issues treated differently. All are concerned with women, but beyond that they may not have much in common. To mention some of the subtypes of feminism: Marxist-feminism, psychoanalytic feminism, Liberal feminism, socialist feminism, Radical feminism, Minority feminism (Black and Lesbian feminism) and French feminism are the major ones. Michael, (1996) inter-marries the varieties as follows:

Feminism in all its variants is an active political stance; it critiques the dominant male-centered culture from a particular position and view point which takes into consideration the complex of power relations-particularly gender/sex relation-between people, institutions, ideologies, languages,

and other systems that function within culture at large and aims in various ways (depending on the type of feminism) to end women's oppression. (2).

Feminism is thus inherently an activist oppositional politics that seeks specific social and cultural changes within the context of everyday material existence. Several subtypes of feminist ideology have developed over the years and all these varieties as it is suggested above are specific political oppositions whose aims are ultimately revolutionary-to eradicate women's oppression.

Marxism can be used to help us understand how economic forces have been manipulated by patriarchal law and custom to keep women economically, politically and socially oppressed as an underclass.

As the theoretical background of feminism is concerned, it is too difficult to define and assess the various over lapping classifications of feminism. Yet, Marxist-feminism, Liberal feminism and Radical feminism are selected for theoretical discussion.

2.1.2.1 Marxist Feminism

Marxist feminism is known as Socialist feminism or Materialist feminism. Marxist literary criticism often shares with feminist criticism a desire to challenge the power structures in contemporary society. For feminist, the issue is a marginalized gender; for Marxists, the issue is not gender but economic power, leading to political power. Guerin, (1992) describes as:

Marxist feminist criticism focuses on the relation of reading to social realities, refusing to accept the separation of art from life. Certainly, the establishment of women's studies programs, book stores, libraries, political action committees, film boards, and community groups attests to the crucial connection between theory and reality offered by feminism.(194).

Marxist feminism emphasizes on the existed cultural setting and criticizes the prevailing ideologies of our culture. It further suggests that men must understand the relationship of men and women as one of unequal power, specifically one of traditional subjugation and oppression of women.

Wallace (1997), tries to relate or look materialist feminism as an explicit or implicit engagement with Marxism, with a view to analysis of the social structures. A materialist feminist critique according to him, examines the ways in which ideologies of history, class, race and the economic are implicated-individually or collectively in the construction of gender identity and subjectivity. He tries to put this as follows:

Materialist feminists demonstrate the relation between capitalism and patriarchal configurations of oppression, while problematizing the orthodox Marxist notion that class analysis alone is capable of adequately addressing the interest of women. (247).

Marxist feminists also began to critically reexamine both Marxist and Freudian texts in an attempt to articulate questions concerning familial configurations. Such critique of the psychic became tools to examine the social representations.

Another writer Mitchell, as quoted in Wallace (1997) argues:

Mitchell calls for an analysis of all structures influencing women's subordination. She emphasizes both the economic and psychological realities of women's participation in the labor force-that is, women as a reserve army of labor, the kinds of work for which women do and do not receive payment, and the historical changes in what has been considered "women's work." (248).

The other subtype of feminism, overlapping with Marxist-feminism, is socialist feminism. Unlike Radical feminists, which call for the destruction of the entire

male sex, socialist feminists do believe that men can coexist with women in this post-capitalist vision of the future. This is because socialist suspects the capitalist system to be the root cause of female oppression, rather than males themselves. Socialists argue that a population can be nurtured into a state of equality, and as such, would have no need to separate men from women.

Marxist feminist theory basically states that the class struggle is the feminist struggle. Marxism offers both a way of finding historical evidence of women's oppression and can describe how writers consciously or unconsciously transpose that evidence into their texts. Marxist feminists, like other Marxist critics, are often attacked for undervaluing or misunderstanding the nature of quality in art Guerin (1992:194). For Marxist feminists, literary value is not a transcendent property, but something conditioned by social beliefs and needs.

2.1.2.2 Liberal feminism:

Liberal feminism is a particular approach to achieving equality between men and women. It emphasizes on the power of an individual person to alter discriminatory practices against women. It is considered as the most important kinds of feminism, which works within the structure of society to integrate women into it. Its roots stretch back to the social contract theory of government instituted by the American Revolution.

The main thrust of liberal feminism is that an individual woman should be able to determine her social role with as great freedom as does a man. Feminism therefore has required removing the historic structure of patriarchal law that denied women's civil rights. The major emphasis is that equality of women before the law, in educational and professional opportunities, change in marriage laws, property rights, inequitable divorce, equal pay for equal work, protection from rape, wife battering in the home and liberation from all dehumanizing forces. In short, it aims at bringing equality between women and

men in the framework of the existing social systems-do not question the underlying basis of women's subordination.

2.1.2.3 Radical feminism:

Radical feminism is a movement that believes sexism is so deeply rooted in society that the only cure is to eliminate the concept of gender. It started to emerge in the late 1960s by the famous leaders T. Grace Atkinson and Shulamith Firestone. It denies the liberal claim that the lack of political or civil rights causes women's oppression.

It is a perspective within feminism that focuses on the hypothesis of patriarchy as a system of power that organizes society into a complex of relationships based on the assertion that male supremacy oppresses women. Radical feminism aims to challenge and overthrow patriarchy by opposing standard gender roles and oppression of women and calls for a radical reordering of society. The reason this group gets the radical label is that they view the oppression of women as the most fundamental form of man's domination, one that cuts across boundaries of race, culture, and economic class. In fact, this is a movement intent on social change, change of rather revolutionary proportions.

This group of feminists claims that the root of women's oppression is biological. They believe that the physical subordination of women by men is the primary form of oppression and others are secondary. Therefore, radical feminism believes that woman's liberation requires a biological revolution. They raise the demand for the destruction of patriarchy.

Radical feminism principles contains many interesting claims such as pregnancy and child birth in which they consider them as the most painful and unpleasant experiences that can person pass through. They believe that the technology should be used to eliminate all kinds of pain particularly from the

fundamental inequality of the bearing and rising of the children. This must be the basic achievement because they believe that the heart of women's oppression is their childbearing and childrearing roles.

Radical feminism questions why women must adopt certain roles based on their biology, just as it questions why men adopt certain other roles based on gender. They attempt to draw lines between biologically determined behavior and culturally determined behavior in order to free both men and women as much as possible from their previous narrow gender roles.

2.1.3 Traditional Gender Roles in Africa

As it is mentioned in the statement of the study, negative gender representations have been used dominantly to justify inequalities. These beliefs are diversified and deep-rooted in the traditional society which excludes women from equal chance to social, political and cultural activities and advantages. Tyson (1999) further argues as:

The belief that men are superior to women has been used, feminists have observed, to justify and maintain the male monopoly of positions of economic, political, and social power, in other words, to keep women powerless by denying them the educational and occupational means of acquiring economic, political, and social power. (86).

According to Tyson, that is, the inferior position long occupied by women in patriarchal society has been culturally, not biologically, produced. As a result of this patriarchy (sexism), which means women are innately inferior to men, they are oppressed by traditional gender roles. This is because gender issue play a part in every aspect of human production and experience, including the production and experience of literature, whether we are consciously aware of these issues or not (Ibid:87). Traditional gender roles are not exceptions in Africa; indeed, these beliefs are deep-rooted and habituated in the social

structures and in our languages. In the traditional fairy tales, proverbs and other oral literatures in general, it is possible to read patriarchal ideology-sexist expressions that express incompetence of women in social, political and cultural activities. The traditional society of Africa was generally regarded as 'a man's world'. Yet, scholars believe that the African women, in her tribal past had, in addition to her revered roles of wife and mother, well-defined social and political functions within the society. The role of African women in the traditional society is mainly confined around the family. These include: her responsibilities as mother, wife and home administrator. Chukukere (1995) argues as:

This childbearing function encourages early marriages, and negotiations in connection with them are often handled by the extended family. A woman's importance and stability in her husband's home are judged by the degree of her fertility, especially her ability to bear Sons. If she is childless, she is considered a failure in her primary duty and often suffers considerably as a result. (2).

Here, it is important to understand that her roles are as a wife and home administrator. Her major tasks are cooking, feeding the family members and keeping the home and its surrounding tidy. Following their mothers' footsteps, daughters continue to socialize according to the cultural norms of their respective societies and role expectations. This trend is thus transmitted from generation to generation in the same manner. Concerning their economic participation, the traditional African women contribute to their families' budget. In agriculture, for example, they weed and tend the crops, often growing vegetables and fruits. "In some societies, women have played dominant roles in peasant economies, occasionally bearing sole responsibility for cultivation and disposal of crops while others hold both land and cattle in their own right" (Ibid:2) In politics, women also have no significant place. According to Chukukere, the colonial Officers regrettably failed to perceive the

political contributions of women, believing that politics is a man's exclusive domain. Consequently, warrant chiefs-symbols of the destructive elements of indirect rule were created and women particularly suffered under their arbitrary jurisdiction (Ibid:4)

Novelists like Flora Nwapa and Buchi Emechi who treat women as subjugated within the traditional African society, specifically challenge the myth of the unchanging and naive rural women who accept without question, the social norms of their male-oriented society. Chukukere says in relation to this:

On the contemporary scene, the dilemma in the life of the heroine in fiction is, much like her traditional counterparts, compounded by her experiences in marriage. Through this institution, it is shown that her aspirations may not always correspond with those of some of her rural counterparts who are faced to sanction polygamy as a socio-economic necessity. (1995:11-12).

According to tradition, the already established norm of the African society, women are raised to believe that their future and stability depend on the success of their marriages and on the protection of their husbands. Their life is materialized in the institution of marriage. It is the issue of African women and their traditional roles in the traditional African society that is reflected in many African women and men's writings. There are many writers of both sexes who advocate female liberation from various social injustices. Through the nature of their protests, they are considered to have aligned themselves to the mainstream of the feminist movement.

2.1.4 Postcolonial Condition and Feminism

Literally, Post colonialism refers to the period following the decline of colonialism. In other words, it is the period after the end or lessening European empires' domination. Although the term post-colonialism generally refers to the period after colonialism, the distinction is not always made. Post-colonialism refers to "a collection of theoretical and critical strategies used to examine the

culture, literature, politics, history, and so forth of former colonies of the European empires."

Postcolonial theory deals with the reading and writing of literature written in previously colonized countries, or literature written in colonizing countries, which deals with colonization or colonized peoples. It focuses particularly on:

1. The way in which literature by the colonizing culture distorts the experience and realities, and inscribes the inferiority, of the colonized people
2. Literature by colonized peoples which attempts to articulate their identity and reclaim their past in the face of that past's inevitable otherness.

The second point focuses, on some of the complexities of the postcolonial situation, in terms of the writing and reading situation of the colonized people. It is built in large part around the concept of otherness. "Otherness includes doubleness, both identity and difference so that every other, every different than and excluded by is dialectically created and includes the values and meaning of the colonizing culture"

With the passing of time since independence, authors have begun to turn their eyes to the more harsh realities of the present and by doing so, attempted to discuss a dialogue about the issue of women in African society. Among the many challenges facing postcolonial writers, one is the attempt to uncover gender inequalities in the traditional society.

Salah in his article 'women's identity and the postcolonial state in *'Year of the Elephant'* argues as:

One of the main concerns of postcolonial theory is to lay bare the dehumanizing and economically devastating consequences of colonialism on indigenous populations and to restore voice to the natives who had

been silenced and exploited under colonial rule. (Research in African Literature, Volume 34, No.3 Fall 2003:66)

In this context, the postcolonial experience has been continuing to be unfair to women as the colonial policies were not the same for men and women. In modern times, "Western ideology introduced by colonialism, has in a paradoxical manner grossly affected the female position in Africa today" Chukukere, (1995:5). This is to mean that the colonial ideology and legacy has had an influence in the postcolonial era. Colonialists were perceiving women as incapable of their political contributions, believing that political power and political leadership is a man's exclusive domain.

Most postcolonial feminists argue that oppressions relating to the colonial experience, particularly racial, classes, and ethnic oppressions, have marginalized women in postcolonial societies. Thus, feminists today struggle to fight gender oppression within their own cultural models of society rather than through those imposed by the Western colonizers.

Feminism and postcolonial discourses both seek to reinstate the marginalized in the face of the dominant and early feminist theory, like early nationalist post-colonialism sought to invert the structures of domination. Both discourses are oriented towards the future. Both are the projects towards revolutionary disruption in society. Encyclopedia of Feminist Literary Theory (1997) says concerning the intersection of post-colonialism and feminist literary criticism as follows:

Feminist literary critics concerned with post-colonialism focus on a variety of issues, such as the history and structures of colonialism evident in literature, and the roles of female characters and women writers play in relation to colonization. (315).

According to the above Encyclopedia, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, post-colonialism introduced several important revisions to feminist criticism. One postcolonial model of criticism argues that the dynamics of colonization-the domination of one culture by another-can also be found in other relationships. This domination of culture of the Western make African women powerless exploited and subordinated in postcolonial period.

In addition to critiquing literary and cultural colonialism, feminist literary critics use post-colonialism to study the works of "colonized" writers, the writing produced within a particular region during and after its colonization.

2.2. Conceptual Framework

2.2.1 African Feminism and Feminist Writing

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

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

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

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

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

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

The writings of women have been relegated to the background though they emerged some few years after the liberation from colonization in some countries such as Ghana. Nfah-Abbenyi cites an editorial by Gloria T. Hulls where she espouses:

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

growth of a movement for women's liberation, however, this situation has dramatically been reduced in recent years (Nfah-Abbenyi, 1997).

The above issues discussed by Hull tell vividly the situation of the female writer in Africa: the many factors that serve as hindrances to the progress and acknowledgment of the works of women. It has not only been an issue of male dominance but race as well. Presently the works of women are gaining the full attention they deserve, I believe.

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

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

2.2.2 African Male Writers and Representation of Women

The unsatisfactory appreciation of the significance of women in life has spilled into imaginative literature. Through their own points of view, the majority of male writers often presented their cultural reality as traditionally deep-rooted habits. Chukukere (1995) supports male

... before examining in detail the content and technique of the female response, an overview of male imaging of women in fiction is necessary, especially since the male writer's perspective has, to a large extent, influenced the female writer's reaction. Some male writers have created female protagonists whose characters and mannerisms are treated with precision and authenticity of detail. (7).

On the other hand, she claims on other writers who departed from this to project certain homogeneity attributable to some basic similarity in men's overall conception of women. In the second group of writers, the role of female characters is made marginal to the plot of the stories while only a few emerge as powerful and credible protagonists. According to Chukukere, the ideal female created by some male writers in fiction on the other hand, often acts within the framework of traditional roles as wife and mother. So strong are social values that the respect and love, which a woman earns, is relative to the degree of her adaptation to these roles. This can be proved in some of the major male writers' works. Achebe's Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* slaughters a goat for one of his wives who has had three Sons in a row, Elechi's Madume in *The Concubine* is demoralized by his wife's inability to produce a male heir. "On the other hand, a barren woman is considered a social failure and invites the wrath of her family and society." The extent to which the female internalizes this belief victim is symbolized through Agom's dilemma in *High life for Lizards* (Ibid). She further illustrates:

The consequence of a woman's unorthodox behavior is shown as Okonkwo in Things Fall Apart heavily beats Anasi, his wife, "for failing to

provide his meal" (P.26) and Ekwueme in the concubine attempts to physically discipline A hurole Legimate as this viewpoint is, it fails to reflect much of the complex and analytical perspectives of the reality of her situation. (Chukukere (1995:7).

Here, it shows that African women are given meaning in terms of servant of their husband in the oppressive traditions of their respected culture. Through the writers (male writers) positive vision of women, they raise our awareness of the need for social justice and equal sexual participation in matters that affect humanity. They contribute a lot by giving the heroines a better and positive role in their fiction. For example, Ramatovlaye and Penda in *Gods Bits of Wood*, Seline in *A Wreath for Udomo*, Wariinga in *Devil on the Cross* and Mma-Tau in *Time of the Butcherbird* remain some of the most dynamic and politically conscious heroines in the African novels (Ibid:113).

On the other hand, some other male writers expose the image of women in their traditional society by characterizing as weak, dependent and irrational. They play down the social significance of women in their writing or traditionally accepted virtues that confine women within family hood.

CHAPTER THREE

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

3.1 Feminism in *No Longer At Ease* and *None to Accompany Me*

In this section of the study, it attempts to make a thorough analysis and interpretation of feminism in the selected novels with the help of Marxist feminist criticism. The novels included in the study are: *No longer at Ease* (1960) and *None To Accompany Me* (1994)

The study intends to investigate female's roles and positions in the social, cultural and political conditions as depicted in the novels. It also examines if there is any change of roles or advancements reflected in the writer's works, as they are reflections of their society in the given periods. Thus, the analysis will be categorized according to the female characters' roles and responsibilities in the given novels and contexts of the time.

3.1.1 Representation of Women character in *No Longer At Ease*

No Longer At Ease (1961) is written in the transitional period of Nigeria to get its independence. It was a period of transition from colonialism to postcolonial identity. And it is a quest for national leadership and national identity, which is represented by an educated generation Obi Okonkwo. With *No Longer at Ease*, the setting moves from rural to urban Lagos, a very sophisticated town of the time. The novel explores the challenges to democracy, corruption, gender relation in the post-colonial political and economic uneasiness in Nigeria.

Achebe starts his visionary feminist ideology in *No Longer At Ease* with his minor character of Joseph's girlfriend Joy. He tries to give some qualities (positive qualities) towards her but makes her simple-minded. This is clearly expressed in the dialogue between Obi Okonkwo and Joseph as:

"She was a nice girl but sometimes very foolish. Sometimes, though, I wish we hadn't broken up. She was simply made about me; and she was a virgin when I met her, which is very rare here." (15).

This implies that she is characterized as "nice" in terms of her virginity. She is also made for the sake of her boyfriend unlike the reverse. This shows that her destiny is with the man and with her virginity. This is her traditional role to stay as valuable and significant in her society. In addition to this, she is as a means of empowerment for her husband being honest and loyal of her virginity and "foolish" out of this situation.

We see Achebe opposes polygamous trend, as it is no more significant in the postcolonial period in his nation. This is quite different from his previous works. Unlike the world in *Things Fall Apart* in which patriarchy and polygamy intrudes oppressively into every sphere of existence, the world in *No Longer At Ease* avoids polygamy. Achebe tells us this through his old character Obi Okonkwo's father who knows perfectly the two world's conditions. Obi Okonkwo's father says:

The men were great in their day. Today greatness has changed its tune. Titles are no longer great, neither are barns or large numbers of wives and children. Greatness is now in the things of the white man. And so we too have changed our tune. We are the first in all the nine villages to send our son to the white man's land. (54).

This is to say that power and 'greatness' is now through education. It is no more through the criteria of the Okonkwo's society-with many wives and children. This novel mirrors the social condition of the two periods is different and his character (Obi Okonkwo's father) also changes his perception of power and feminist ideology accordingly.

In *No Longer At Ease*, following the minor character mentioned before, there is a radical change in the style of female portraiture. Clara (Obi's girlfriend and fiancé) is educated, economically or financially independent woman. She is a nurse by profession in her overseas education. And now she is financially independent.

On the other hand, Achebe gives her incomplete qualities. He fails to give her complete and fully strong characters. Perhaps, this may be the influence of female characters of his previous novels. She is not morally powerful. She is the victim of the traditional belief of her society. Her overseas education couldn't eliminate this deep-rooted perception and feels inferior in her own personality. She believes that she is not the appropriate mate of Obi Okonkwo. This is not because he is more educated than her but of the cultural impositions. As the relationship between Clara and Obi strengthened, he wants to marry her. However de-motivated by the name given to her family and affected her too much. She is mentally unstable and says, "I can't marry you," suddenly as Obi tried to kiss her under the tall mango tree at the edge of the swimming-pool, and exploded into tears." (70).

As can be inferred from their dialogue, she is not mentally strong to forget and forgive the traditional rebuffs of the society. Though she is educated, she is unaccomplished character. She is presented as a lovely girl who maximizes her pleasure. She is a lover but unable to question why such discriminations are created. She is intellectually emancipated but her education doesn't enable her to question. The novelist particularly recognizes the influence of European education doesn't help her a lot as compare with the male character-Obi. He asks:

"Why can't you marry me? For answer she threw herself at him and began to weep violently on his shoulder. 'What's the matter, Clara? Tell me. ... ' I am an Osu,' she wept. Silence. She said, quite firmly, almost gaily a terrible kind of gaiety. One the tears 'Nonsense!' said Obi.

She bitterly feels shameful of this traditionally sanctioned norm of her society. She also fails to reject it and convince Obi (her boy friend). Here is the weakness that makes her simple minded. Obi knows that this is outdated traditions. Perhaps, his Western education helps him to decide and ignore his friends' advice not to marry her. Joseph repeatedly warns Obi to follow the norm of the society rather than to marry an 'Osu'- an outcast girl. However, Obi rejects anybody's request and decided to buy an engagement ring. The narrator says:

It was scandalous that in the middle of the twentieth century a man could be barred from marrying a girl simply because her great-great-great-great-grand father had been dedicated to serve a god, there by setting himself a part and turning his descendants into a forbidden caste to the end of time. Quite- unbelievable. (72).

Achebe is therefore, claiming against the old culture that it was the beginning of patriarchy and gender inequality. He further asserts that this traditional or uncivilized assumption is no longer valid in the new era particularly in the postcolonial time. The social classification of the previous generation is insignificant at this period. One can be deduced from this is that modernization has been minimizing oppression.

In addition to this, Obi feels pity on the victims of this unscientific believe. It seems to be an attack on the traditional assumptions and on Clara, who fails to oppose openly. Clara is socialized with the cultural norms of her respected society even after she became a nurse. She has little contribution in the struggle against such assumptions. So, she is comparatively weak than her male counterpart (Obi).

It is expected that education could enable her to widen her knowledge and there by enhance her struggle against such believes. But, she is no more mentally powerful and ready to do this. Here, we can even dare to say that Achebe gives her this quality to indicate the awareness of educated females of

that time. He keeps describing her in a very particular way; that is as passive. She even accepts the destiny of the women of the period, the alienation of some group of society, as an outcast.

On the other hand, Obi, as educated young man contradicts with his friends, like Joseph and his beloved parents on the old believe. "And here was an educated man telling Obi he did not understand." (72) He says, "Not even my mother can stop me," (72) ignoring his friend's suggestions. This cultural conflict between the two generations indicates that the old patriarchal culture has no acceptance by the new educated generation.

Educated generation-personified with Obi Okonkwo, challenges the notion of old culture on marriage as opposed to Joseph's continuous advices. Joseph argues:

'What you are going to do concerns not only yourself but your whole family and future generations. If one finger brings oil it soils the others. In future, when we are all civilized, anybody may marry anybody. But that time has not come. We of this generation are only pioneers' (75).

This dilemma clearly shows the conflict between the new idea and the old custom. Even Joseph is optimistic about the future civilized generation that equality of gender and freedom of choice will be achieved. But, Obi seems to be static in his idea that it is time to overthrow the old thinking and begin a new phase. The president also strongly opposes Obi's decision to marry an "Osu" "I have heard that you are moving around with a girl of doubtful ancestry, and even thinking of marrying her..." (82:83).

In general, Achebe creates Obi, an educated man who denies traditionalism refusing his mother's threatening warning of death if he marries an outcast or Osu. Here, his mother represents traditionalism and the outcast protagonist Clara represents the modern female of that time. Though Clara is educated, financially independent woman, she is an Osu, an outcast woman.

The novel depicts a desire to come to a new outlook of marriage. We see Obi Okonkwo, the major character stands on women's side opposing harmful and outdated assumption of the traditional society. And he strongly opposes the social order or hierarchal social order.

3.1.2 Representation of Women Character in *None To Accompany Me*

Nadine Gordimer is one of the South African writers of the transition to have swiftly adapted her writing to the demands of the new social order. During the apartheid era she gained indisputably worldwide recognition for her anti-apartheid activism by means of her writing. She argued that the urgency of history was the most imperative concern that needed more attention. Therefore, as a writer, it was her mission to fight against injustices in her society by using artistic weapons to dismantle the oppressive regime.

None To Accompany Me represents two powerful female characters with advanced education. On one side there is Vera Stark, a brilliant white lawyer who plays a pivotal role in the setting up of the Legal Foundation helping black people to claim redistribution of land. Her public activity as the Deputy Director of the Legal Foundation makes her use her brains and energy to work for the benefit of the needy by even risking her life in critical circumstances where Oupa, her black assistant, gets killed.

Vera is depicted as a fulfilled woman in the public domain, as she aspires for retirement from a milieu in which she considers she has achieved a great deal. In professional comparison with her husband Ben, Vera represents a successful lawyer, while Ben's artistic career is described as a simple failure due to his lack of maturity in tackling domestic issues. His irrational passion for Vera makes him sacrifice his artistic talent. Ben becomes a real burden to his wife on whom he totally depends: physically, emotional and financially.

Vera, on the contrary, epitomises competence and image of a powerful woman as exemplified by the narrator's description of her personality at work: *she is a*

woman with "White-streaked hair cut like a man" (Gordimer 1994:23), with her "briefcase documenting inquiry into other people's lives" (Gordimer 1994:39). Both her hair-style and attitude reveal Vera's equal status with men, since her "haircut of a woman who has set aside her femininity" (Gordimer 1994:39-40) highlights Vera's attempt to break subservient etiquettes socially ascribed to a woman. However, Vera wants to withdraw from the public sphere to concentrate on her private life, a field where she still has a great deal to learn.

On the other hand, Gordimer depicts a black woman, Sibongile Maqoma or Sally, who returns from exile during the transition period in South Africa. Unlike Vera, who shifts from the public life to the private in search of self-discovery after achieving much in the public domain, Sally, Vera's friend, represents the new black woman who is asserting her status in the public sphere. She epitomises the image of the new black woman who benefits from the policy of black empowerment, which attempts to redress past disparities by giving leadership positions to black people.

Sally is an influential political figure whose personality has grown with her political involvement in the movement while in exile in England. She is depicted as a woman of strong personality whose "obvious undocile femininity" (Gordimer 1994:78) is even feared by her husband whenever she speaks at conferences:

Didymus kept himself a slight tautness, the tug of a string in the gut ready to tighten in defence of Sibongile- he was troubled that her frankness would be interpreted as aggression; her manner, sceptical, questioning, iconoclastic, would be taken as disrespectful of the traditional style of political intercourse that had been established in the higher ranks of the Movement through many years of exile, and would count against her advancement at the level to which she had, for the first time, gained access. (Gordimer 1994:77-78)

Sally is given a high position in the public arena as she is "appointed Deputy Director of the Movement's redeployment programme" (Gordimer 1994:52). As compared to her husband Didymus, Sally has a better job. She travels around the world to represent her country at the conferences. Sally shows an emergent, positive image of a woman who has been promoted to a decision-making position. She belongs to a higher social class where women start extricating themselves from social conditions prescribed for women. Gordimer appears to endorse Sibongile Muthwa's vision concerning the emancipation of women in the public field.

Sally's work environment exemplifies the high status of an intellectual woman who effectively plays a leading role in a male-dominated world:

Although Sibongile spoke of her job as if it were quite humble- it was the democratic vocabulary, hangover from exile with its brave denial of hierarchy - she was one who could not be reached except through a secretary these days. She had her offices and battery of command - computers, fax, assistants whose poor education and lack of skills she was attempting to tolerate while disciplining and training them. When there were complaints about her she said to her comrades in high positions what they themselves thought it better not to express. (Gordimer 1994:74)

Gordimer portrays a black woman who by means of education has gained power in a formerly male-dominated territory. In his autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*, Nelson Mandela comments on the importance of education as a factor of social mobility:

Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mineworker can become the head of the mine; that a child of a farm workers can become the president of a great nation. (Mandela 1994: 194)

Unlike some texts by some African male writers in which women occupy secondary roles as compared to their male counterparts, Gordimer's female characters have leading roles while men take less important positions. The novelist seems to reverse traditional views about women in society. In fact, for centuries women in many societies were confined to the performance of domestic tasks and to playing secondary roles while men enjoyed high positions in the public arena. The representation of Maqomas shows that Sally's life is more oriented towards the public field than her husband's, as she is always on duty and less time to allocate to her domestic life. Didymus, her husband, is instead fulfilling her supposedly "feminine" role by taking care of domestic tasks:

Home was set up, but she did not have time to do the daily tasks that would maintain it, it was Didymus who took the shopping lists she scribbled in bed at night, who have drove Mpho (their daughter) to and from her modern dance class, to the dentist, to the urgent obligations that school girls have to be here or there, it was he who called the plumber and reported the telephone out of order. His working day was less crowded than hers. She would be snatching up files, briefcase, and keys in the morning while he was dipping bread fast in coffee, changing back and forth from local news to BBC. Their working life was housed in the same building; sometimes he came to look in on her office; she was talking fast on the telephone, held up a hand not to be interrupted; she was in the middle of briefing the fieldworkers through whom she had initiated research into the reintegration of returned exiles. (Gordimer 1994: 74-75)

Sally is represented as a powerful and hardworking woman in the public field, whereas her husband Didymus is less visible in the public domain and is portrayed as exhibiting the attribute of a weak and lazy man in comparison with Sally. The husband does not have a choice but to take care of domestic tasks, since his wife's working days are busier than his.

Vera, on the one hand, symbolizes the woman who does not find satisfaction in marriage and motherhood. However, she seeks for self-discovery after having satisfactorily performed her public role. Vera has reached a stage in life where she is more concerned with the assessment of her personal identity.

On the other hand, Sally represents the intellectual black woman who wants to prove women's worth in the public arena. The demands of the public life make Sally retreat more and more from the so-called 'women's domestic duties'. Unlike Vera, the white lawyer, who has fulfilled her mission in the public domain, Sally is just starting to establish her presence in the field where black women were denied access under the previous dispensation.

Sally shows diligence and efficiency at work. She wants to teach the same virtues to her daughter Mpho, as both Sally and Didymus encourage their "bright girl whose intelligence had been stimulated in exile by a superior education..." (Gordimer's 1994: 77).

Another striking feature of the novel is women's solidarity, exemplified by the relationship between Vera and Sally. The two women have been friends for a long time. Vera is Sally's friend indeed as she welcomes Sally and her family, inviting them to live at her house when the latter arrive from exile and do not at first have a place to stay. Vera assists Sally so that she and her family adjust much more quickly to the new South Africa where the returning exiles are disillusioned by the current situation of unemployment. Both women share accounts of their work-day experiences whenever they meet to discuss things. The balanced and satisfying relationship between Vera and Sally shows unity between a black and a white woman. Both women transcend racial boundaries to assert their common gender identity which, Gordimer seems to tell us, is no longer determined by 'the body' or physiology, but rather by 'the mind'.

3.1.3 Comparative Analysis of the Major and Some Minor Women Characters in *None To Accompany Me* and *No Longer At Ease*

In the selected novels of Achebe and Gordimer, we see changing attitude towards women's roles. Their feminist prospects in the given periods are chronologically developed. Perhaps, the people whom Achebe and Gordimer describe will represent the rest of Nigeria, South Africa and a great many of the nations of Africa. So, their literatures reflect the existing social and traditional condition of Nigerian, South African women and the majority of African women in their respective society. Therefore, it is possible to see Achebe's and Gordimer's progressive vision of women characters in their postcolonial and post-apartheid novels comparatively.

Clara, in *No Longer At Ease* is an educated women, a nurse by profession. Unlike the colonial women characters of Achebe's novels, she is at least educated and economically independent. She is expected by her society to be active and determinant in her country.

In contrary, Clara, as educated woman, is found to be mentally weak and inactive as victim of her traditional rebuffs. She is an Osu-an outcast girl in her tribe. What is most surprising is she accepts this norm as her destiny after her Western education. Obi was intelligent enough to reject and convince his parents that this discouraging traditional believe (Osu) is "nonsense" and meaningless. He further decided to marry her. But Clara responds in the most unreasonable way; she tries to show herself as if she is not fit for him taking this outdated believe.

Her education didn't change her much. She is not strong to oppose traditional unreasonable norms. She fails to bring moral strength to reflect modern outlook being economically free. Unlike Obi, she possesses no special knowledge, holds no special position in the political structure. She is often innocent and open to her boy friend. Joseph describes her as:

But Clara was not like that; she had no coyness in her. Not much, anyway. That was one of the things Obi liked best about her. She had seemed so sure of herself that, unlike other women, she didn't consider how quickly or cheaply she was captured. (70).

This implies that she is reluctant in her character. Although one might expect Clara, as educated, to be strong, mentally and physically resistant, productive or creative and role model for aspiring women's position, such is not necessarily the case. She is weak minded women; obedient to her traditional assumptions. She is passive just like the illiterate women of the period.

If we compare Clara with Gordimer's Sibongile Maqoma (Sally), a powerful black woman, there is a big gap in their characters. Sibongile represents freedom fighters that were forced to choose the route of exile to carry out resistance beyond national borders. Since Sibongile's return from England, she has begun playing an active role in socio-political transformation of the newly democratised South African system.

Gordimer politicises Sibongile, the black protagonist, by assigning her to a wide range of political roles available to black women in the new dispensation. Sibongile's political position as deputy director of the movement in charge of social reinsertion of returnees from exile and her election as member of the executive board of a post-apartheid movement indicate the advance of black women to occupy powerful positions in the political sphere.

Gordimer's depiction of Sibongile's political activism shows that the character is totally empowered in the political arena. She is very enterprising in tackling new national political challenges.

Gordimer depicts Vera Stark, a white lawyer who uses her professional skills to resist political oppression of black people. Through references to the activities of Vera's Legal Foundation the reader is informed that Vera "had been active in

campaigns against detention without trial, forced removals of communities, franchises that excluded blacks" (Gordimer 1994: 5).

Vera is professionally committed to resist political oppression, as she uses her professions as platforms of political resistance. Vera resorts to her Legal Foundation to fight against socio-political oppression. Vera is described as a powerful woman who transcends the dread of dying for the sake of oppressed. The incident where she gets injured and Oupa, her black assistant, meets his death, exemplifies the heroine's courage and resilience in participating in the political struggle.

Both Sally and her husband are influential figures in public life because of their political engagement in the struggle. Sally is preferred over her husband, Didymus, to take up a position in the new government. Didymus's political record jeopardizes his chances of being elected as they reveal that he was once involved in the circle of informants against the revolutionary movement. Sally's public life will influence her private one by redefining domestic roles within the couple's marital relationship.

The Maqomas exemplify the transformation process taking place in the domestic sphere of black couples in the new dispensation. The old domestic power structure is reversed in *None To Accompany Me*. Sally is represented as a strong woman, whereas Didymus exemplifies the weak man who is dependent on his wife. This dependence is not only emotional, but also material. The woman has a better income than her husband. Sally's public life takes her away from the former socially established duties of a woman's private life. She is always on missions abroad while Didymus stays at home. Sally does not have enough time for her husband anymore because she is completely immersed in her public role. Women's acquisition of power both in public and domestic fields is a situation men need to adapt to in the new dispensation; otherwise the relationships within the intimate sphere of the couple will turn cold.

Didymus is so aware of his weak position vis-a-vis his wife that he starts losing his biological power to ensure Sally's sexual satisfaction.

Marxist feminists emphasize the material world in which women are daily oppressed as women with in specific political, cultural, historical, economic, ideological contexts. Sibongile is totally empowered economically and political arena. She is very enterprising in tackling new national political challenges. The portrayal of Vera and Sally depicts Gordimer's feminist outlook of empowering women. Both Clara and Sibongile are educated but the social role they have in the society is quite different. This is due to that the time the novels were written and the feminist outlook of the writer's.

Gordimer's narrative also shows particular interest in the nature of relationships existing within the family unit. The Maqoma daughter Mpho's pregnancy, for instance, takes the reader towards examining a novel relation between parents and daughter. Sally pinpoints her refusal to see her daughter bearing an undesired child in her teenage years by demanding the abortion of the foetus. Despite her anger, she tries to engage in an intimate dialogue with her daughter to persuade her to accept the need for having an abortion, using the argument that she herself has gone through the same operation before. Therefore, there is nothing to worry about, because the operation is not that painful. Through this attitude the narrator categorizes Sibongile (Sally) as "belong(ing) to the generation and the experience that saw emancipation in burdening their half-adult children with the intimate life of their parents" (Gordimer 1994:182).

Unlike Sally, Didy's mother welcomes the foetus in her granddaughter's womb. She takes a stand against abortion and volunteers to mother Mpho's child. Through fully depicting this family matter, the narrator exposes the differences in attitudes between two or three generations of women who have different approaches to sexuality and attendant matters. The grandmother is the

representative of traditional ideas and values. Eventually, Mpho is the epitome of the new generation of women who live in a social environment characterized by its sexual liberation. Gordimer's investigation of the domestic sphere discloses a wide range of new dilemmas facing any ordinary family in the new dispensation.

Vera and Ben are in a similar position to the Maqomas, but in different circumstances. Like Mpho(Sally's daughter), Annie(Vera Stark's daughter) startles her parents by revealing her homosexual orientation to them. Vera tries to sympathize with her friends (who are disturbed by Mpho's pregnancy) by telling Didy about Annie's lesbianism. In some ways, she seems to say, Mpho is still located within the social norm, whereas Annie has transgressed that by choosing a lesbian lifestyle, which Vera's generation sees as so unconventional as to be nearly unacceptable.

Through dialogue between Didy and Vera, Gordimer broadens her readers' understanding of new social realities that need to be taken into account for the formation of a society based on the new South African Constitution, which has rescinded any form of discriminatory law governing sexual relations. Vera, who is not morally perturbed by her daughter's homosexuality, tries to find a reason why Annie has chosen a female partner instead of a man. Thus, she comes to the following conclusion: "I suppose we believe we're responsible for what we think has gone wrong with our children and in their judgment hasn't gone wrong at all"(Gordimer 1994:177).Vera seems to suggest that the older generation should not negatively assess the younger generation's deeds. However, the old should search for what they did that made the youth look for other ways of living, which are different from those of their parents.

Whereas in *No Longer At Ease* with the minor character Joseph's girlfriend Joy, Achebe tries to give some qualities (positive qualities) towards her but makes

her simple-minded. This is clearly expressed in the dialogue between Obi Okonkwo and Joseph as:

"She was a nice girl but sometimes very foolish. Sometimes, though, I wish we hadn't broken up. She was simply made about me; and she was a virgin when I met her, which is very rare here." (15).

This implies that she is characterized as "nice" in terms of her virginity. She is also made for the sake of her boyfriend unlike the reverse. This shows that her destiny is with the man and with her virginity. This is her traditional role to stay as valuable and significant in her society. In addition to this, she is as a means of empowerment for her husband being honest and loyal of her virginity and "foolish" out of this situation.

In Gordimer's Novel the readers face the most challenging social issues like abortion and lesbianism which are difficult to accept even for educated society but in Achebe's Novel the readers deal with virginity which is simple to accept. Therefore, we see differences in issues which they raise since they are reflections of their society in the given periods. Similarly, the female characters' roles and responsibilities in the given novels and contexts of the time are different. In *None To Accompany Me* the role of the women is very exemplar whereas in *No Longer At Ease*, the role of women is opposite.

None To Accompany Me unveils a large range of sexual behaviour, which was deemed unconventional and inadmissible under the previous political dispensation (ranging from homosexuality to interracial marriage). The politics of sex is so abundant in this text that Gordimer's new writing, which is oriented towards more intimate issues, stuns many critics because of her previous foregrounding of politics during the apartheid era.

In the post-liberation context, Gordimer adapts to the new demands of her society where new social phenomena are emerging. In *None To Accompany Me*

the author takes a close look particularly at new relationships built upon the democratic principle of total respect for individual freedoms. The author depicts the new South African society in its behavioural mutation. She enters the intricacies of private life, which is also affected by the changes in the public arena. Gordimer evokes the up-to-date domestic issues such as homosexuality, interracial relationships, adoption and AIDS.

In *None To Accompany Me* the reader can observe that Gordimer's characters enjoy the sexual freedom of the post-oppressive times. Annie, Vera's daughter, exemplifies the category of the people who publicly unveil their homosexual orientation. She transgresses traditional standards not only by choosing a lesbian partner but also by deciding to live in the same household with her partners, evincing publicly the novel kind of couple that society now allows and accepts. Vera accepts her daughter's free choice but raises a new problematic, which bothers her a great deal. She does not hesitate to inquire whether Annie's sexual desire is totally fulfilled in the absence of a penis:

In fact, the author represents two categories of women. The first group of women acknowledge that the presence of a man is crucial for their sexual fulfilment. Despite its attachment to traditional standards, this conception, as Denise Brahimi (a French critic) demonstrates in her *Nadine Gordimer: la femme, la politique et le roman*(2000) does not sustain masculine power. Simultaneously, it does not express any antagonism towards feminism. According to Brahimi, Gordimer restores the balance in the society where these two categories of women really exist without criticizing any of the two practices.

The second group of women, on the contrary, rejects the traditional definition of couple and finds their joy within the same sex union. Gordimer shows that new sexual orientation such as lesbianism have become legitimized or normal practices in the new South Africa.

After having for decades stood strongly against racial discrimination, Gordimer remains an advocate of a fair society where injustices and discrimination of any kind are not tolerated. Her public reference to the most intimate questions seems to show that the author wants to acknowledge that domestic issues such as sexuality should not be neglected in public debates if the individual is to be liberated from social or cultural constrictions.

Gordimer's text displays a wide range of newly legitimated relationships. The reader is taken into the changes taking place in the new South Africa. *None To Accompany Me* depicts new and different types of couples, which were not accepted during the apartheid era. Homosexual relationships are juxtaposed with interracial ones. Vera's love affair with Zeph Rapulana, the black man with whom she has decided to spend the rest of her life, exemplifies the transformation process in personal relationships, breaks sexual taboos of the past by choosing as her partner a black man, whom she sees as the catalyst for her happiness.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Most creative writers in postcolonial Africa shifted from the theme of colonization to other current themes such as feminism. Many issues of concern to feminist thought are raised and addressed in their novels. Among those Achebe and Gordimer can be mentioned.

Achebe, one of the famous writers in Africa deals with the theme of feminism in his postcolonial novels. Unlike the representation of women in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, he tries to give them good features in his in *No Longer At Ease*. He seems to be conscious of women's roles in the new independent nation. By enabling them to be educated, economically independent, he glorifies their major roles in their respective country. Being independent economically means being independent of their husbands to participate in the political structure of the nation.

None To Accompany Me examines the relationship between sex and power. The narrative presents a profound alteration of the traditional definition of power between sexes. The Maqomas and the Starks are two families ruled by two strong women while their husbands exhibit weak personalities. The text highlights the possible interchangeable structure of power between genders. The female person, often referred to as being the weaker sex in terms of the patriarchal mindset, becomes in this particular text the stronger sex. Gordimer assigns lofty roles to her female characters while men occupy subservient positions in the plot.

Despite her proto-feminist outlook (as conveyed in this text), Gordimer does not claim to be a feminist per se because her perspective goes beyond feminism. Vera, Gordimer's heroine, clarifies the author's vision about sex and power relationships. In fact, Vera is represented as a strong woman while Ben, her husband, is the epitome of the weak man. Vera's steadfast and zealous

determination to embark on a self-discovery process makes her realise that there is no need to live with a man who cannot live without her.

Moreover, they (the female characters in both novels) are educated or intellectual. The reason why Achebe and Gordimer make them educated is to give them power. Once if they are educated, they would get salary and power in their society as well as in their home. If they are no more economically dependent on their husbands, they can be free to involve in the sociopolitical activities of the nation. This is where Achebe and Gordimer reflect their own Marxist feminist outlook. The Novels' Marxist feminism ideology and their stress on the economic and ideology of the female characters are significant to avoid oppression.

Furthermore, gender is a relation of power, where by the weak become 'feminine' and the strong become 'masculine' according to Marxist feminists. The novels challenge the traditional associations of female with feminine and limited in the home and male with masculine and controls economic and political power. The depiction of these female characters is not as objects and house wives; it is rather as intellectuals who are ready to solve their society's problems.

When we see their male counter parts (intellectual and democrat husbands and fiancées, they are no more authoritarian and oppressive to them. They are democrats who believe on discussion and dialogue for everything. Unlike their fathers who represent the old generation, they are gentle and self-confident characters who represent the new generation. So, Achebe's and Gordimer's novels assert that changes in the status of the relationship between the opposite sexes are necessary with new men alongside new women that are educated men and women.

Nevertheless, though the women characters have common qualities in their characterization, they have a big power difference in their respected political

situation. Clara in *No Longer At Ease* is passive and relatively less concerned to involve in the social and political activities of the nation of the period. She is very much influenced by her traditional name as an Osu. Even she doesn't oppose these traditional rebuffs as an educated woman. Generally, she is subjective towards every activity in the new nation.

While women in the *None To Accompany Me* are decision makers and politicians. The writer protest against power inequalities between women and men is highly emphasized. The women are relatively more powerful than men.

Achebe and Gordimer structure their narrative in such a way that shows the realization of women's strength in a society. Hence, Achebe's and Gordimer's explicit focus on the middle-class, and their concentration on the nature of female subjectivity, speaks directly to the source of anxiety within socialist feminism today. Their feminist thinking in the texts shows political desire of upgrading women for autonomy and independence.

In general, Achebe's and Gordimer's attitude towards women roles in Nigeria, South Africa and in many countries of Africa are highly emphasized in their novels. Their feminist outlook clearly shows the development of feminism in the postcolonial and post-apartheid novels. As a writer and critic, they believe that the repression or misrepresentation of women can be exposed and uncovered. And they try to apply this in their novels. The trend of feminism and the roles of the female characters in the novels is progressively changing for better. Women's cause of Gordimer is really more forceful than Achebe's.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. Primary Sources

- Achebe, Chinua (1960). No Longer At Ease: Heinemann, London
- Gordimer, Nadine. 1994. *None To Accompany Me*. London: Bloomsbury.

B. Secondary Sources

- Achebe, Chinua (1958). Things Fall Apart: London
- Brown, Charryl. And Olson Karen (1978). Feminist Criticism: Essays on Theory, Poetry and Prose. The Screw Press Inc. London.
- Chukurere, Gloria Chineze (1995). Gender Voices and Choices: Redefining Women in Contemporary African Fiction. Fourth Dimension Publishing Co. LTD, Nigeria
- Guerin, Wilfred L., Labor, Earle and Morgan, Lee Rees man, Jeanne C. and Willingham, John R. (1992): A Handbook of critical Approaches to Literature. (3rd ed), Oxford University press, New York, USA.
- Hogan, Patrick Colm (2000). Philosophical Approach to the study of Literature: University Press of Florida, Orlando
- Hornby, A.S. ed. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English: Third Edition. London W.I: Oxford University Press, 1975. Print.
- Jefferson, Ann, and Robey, David. (1982): Modern Literary Theory: A comparative Introduction. (2nd ed), B.T. Bats ford Ltd, London.
- Lodge, David (1988) Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader. Longman, London.
- Mandela, Nelson. 1994. Long Walk to Freedom. Johannesburg: Macdonald Purnell.
- Michael, Magali Cornier (1996). Feminism and the Postmodern Impulse: Post-World War II Fiction. State University, New York
- Robbins, Ruth. 2000. Literary Feminisms. London: Macmillan.
- Sohoni, S.V. A New Approach Dictionary of Living English. Pune: Nitin Prakashan, 2000. Print.
- Tyson, Lois. (1999): Critical Theory Today: A user Friendly Guide. Garland Publishing, Inc., a member of the Taylor and Francis Group, New York, London.

C. Internet Sources and Websites

- Salah Moukhli (2003) "Research in African Literature". Vol34, no3 Journal

Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.

Name: Daniel Tenkir

Signature:_____

Place: AAU: Institute of Language Studies

Date of Submission: June 6, 2018