

**THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN  
IN SELECTED NOVELS OF PETER ABRAHAMS AND  
AYI KWEI ARMAH**

A Thesis Presented to the School of Graduate Studies  
Addis Ababa University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Master of Arts Degree in Literature (English)

By  
Yodit Admasu

July, 2007  
Addis Ababa

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF GRADUATE  
STUDIES**

THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN  
IN SELECTED NOVELS OF PETER ABRAHAMS AND AYI KWEI  
ARMAH

By  
Yodit Admasu

**Approved by Board of Examiners:**

---

Advisor

---

Signature

---

Advisor

---

Signature

---

Advisor

---

Signature

## **DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my work and that all sources of materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Name: Yodit Admasu

Signature:

Place and date of submission: Addis Ababa University July 09,  
2007.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I would like to forward my appreciation and admiration to my advisor Zerihun Asfaw for the constant support and advice he has given me. I would also like to acknowledge my dear husband Zenebe Tamiru, in giving priority to my education before his. Most of all I would like to extend my appreciation to the Addis Ababa University for providing me with the opportunity to expand my horizon.

## **ABSTRACT**

The study is aimed at finding out the portrayal of women as illustrated in four selected novels. It tries to show the portrayal of women as strong and influential in the described society. It also shows that the feminist theories designed by western societies do not necessarily apply to the African societies.

I have selected two African writers: Peter Abrahams from South Africa and Ayi Kwei Armah from Ghana, and two novels of each writer that I found portray women's role in both traditional and modern societies.

In the analysis, I have found out that the portrayal of women in African societies is quite different from that of western society. African societies as portrayed in the selected novels acknowledge the role of women in their respective societies. I have also found from the literature review that the integration of gender study in African societies has not achieved the desired result. The society reflects upon the gender studies as a move towards rejection of their culture and identity.

Based on the analysis, I have made I have found that African men acknowledge the potential of women. The portrayals of women in the selected works indicate that women in the described societies are given a significant part. I have found that the introduction of foreign theories in a society can have a disastrous effect. In order to move towards development developing nations need to equally involve both women and men.

# Table of Contents

Content	Page No.
<b>Acknowledgments</b> .....	i
<b>Abstract</b> .....	ii
<b>Chapter One</b>	
I Introduction.....	1
1.1 Rationale of the Study.....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	2
1.3 Objective of the Study.....	5
1.4 Significance of the Study.....	6
1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study.....	7
1.6 Method of Data Collection.....	8
1.7 Application of the Results.....	8
1.8 Organization of the Study.....	9
<b>Chapter Two</b>	
II Literature Review.....	10
2.1 Feminist Movements and Theories.....	10
2.2 Stereotypical Views of Women.....	15
2.2.1 Religious views.....	16
2.2.2 Philosophical Views.....	17
2.2.3 Psychological views.....	23
2.2.4 Legendary Women.....	27
2.3 African Writers .....	33
<b>Chapter Three</b>	
III Analysis of the Texts.....	37
3.1 Synopsis of the Texts.....	37
3.1.1 <i>A Wreath for Udomo</i> .....	37
3.1.2 <i>A Night of their Own</i> .....	38

3.1.3 <i>Why are We So Blest?</i> .....	39
3.1.4 <i>The Healers</i> .....	40
3.2 Women's role in Movements.....	41
3.3 Sole Companion.....	49
3.3.1 Consolation .....	50
3.3.2 Advisors.....	56
3.4 Care for Their Women.....	60
3.5 A Temptress .....	63
<b>Chapter Four</b>	
IV Conclusion .....	67
<b>Bibliography</b>	

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Rationale of the Study**

When I was first introduced to the concept of Feminism, I had a mixed feeling. I was impressed by the contribution of strong women like Jane Austin and Charlotte Bronte, who have done more than their share to the inception of women movement. But then, I came across various feminist views and theories that are developed and I was confused by the various messages conveyed to the followers of the movement. A feminist movement that started out for equal rights to women turns to be a doctrine that promotes the chauvinistic nature of women, and how men have oppressed women for centuries. I found this position of feminists and feminist critics confusing.

Being a woman, I appreciate the achievements of the movement over the past centuries. It is a remarkable achievement as to how the challenges that women faced are conquered to make it possible for a woman to vote, to be educated, participate and lead in political and social activities.

Men in general are not as bigoted as some women make them out to be. Even in a traditional society, men are seen giving respect to women. We can see that women are given a lot of responsibilities in the society. We find men who accept women's strength and ability to prosper in some areas that are found to be difficult for men. It is labeled that it is a woman's place, but that doesn't necessarily entail that it is a lower place than a man's place.

Times have changed; a lot has been achieved based on the feminist movement. Gender equality is generally accepted by both men and

women of this generation. It has been observed that women can contribute to a society as much as men. In this study I would like to present that men do not deny the contribution of women in their social and professional lives. In fact, in some social endeavors, men identify the preeminence of women.

The two authors of my study have been randomly selected to represent the various societal views of women in Africa. The writers are selected with the view that they would best illustrate the significant contribution of women in difficult situations. The study would comprise the societal attitude of women as reflected in the selected literary works. I will dwell upon female characters of *A Wreath for Udomo (1956)*, *A Night of Their Own (1965)*, *Why Are We So Blest? (1974)*, and *The Healers (1979)*.

The selected novels represent pre- and post-colonial Africa. The comparative study of the selected novels, which were written before and during the uprising of the feminist movement, is believed to give a picture to the portrayal of women in Africa. I have tried to illustrate the influence and contributions of female characters to the movement and there by derived at the perception of women as portrayed in the selected texts. I have tried to show that various traditional societies regard women and their role in a different way and that they are not always discriminatory.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Every society has its own interpretation of a woman. The behavior of a woman has created a lot of controversies. Women, over the years, have been characterized in various ways. But as Wilson (1963: 105) states,

“nobody seems quite sure what a woman really is. A woman’s behavior is found to be difficult to define”.

Gender studies show that women have been oppressed. There are also studies that indicate the influence of women on men. Wall (1992: 116) explains that man has, from the beginning of time, honored but feared women. He states that men have bound together in social defense against female nature. Wall points to men’s joining hands to resist the strong influence that women can have over them.

Bristow (1997: 42) quoted philosopher Otto Weininger as dividing femininity into angelic and demonic, virtuous and vicious types implying that these apparently opposite poles of good and bad nature of women were in some respect interdependent. Weininger concludes that men are constantly in danger from overwhelming possessions of all women. He further indicates that a woman has the potential to weaken the man by manipulating his vulnerable mental instincts.

I have come across research studies on the relationship between women and men that indicate women have played a significant role in men’s life. Gender studies and feministic views that I have come across have made a crude generalization in stating that men have suppressed and undermined women. According to “Poulain da la Barre, a well known feminist ...’All that has been written about women by men should be suspected for the men are at once judge and party to the law suit” (Chukukere, 19) I find this can be an example of the general remarks made about men by women.

In Ethiopia, where we find diverse nations and nationalities with their own cultures, women are generally given respect. The women in our

society may address their men as lords, they may wash their man's feet or even go to the extent of not dining together but this does not imply that they are oppressed. This is their custom that they are brought up in. It is their culture that induces them to offer their young daughters to marriage, it is their custom to circumcise their daughters, and it is their custom that leads them to do various things that we in the modern society label as 'primitive' and 'wrong'. In the age of globalization we tend to revoke the legacy of our ancestors. We tend to forget our traditional ways and assume the practice of the western society.

The theories that may antagonize men might have a destructive force in these traditional societies. I am not implying that all the negative practices should be maintained, but rather greater attention should be given to what we promote in a society. I am implying that efforts should be made to implement gender and feminist ideas in a way that they are harmonized with the local customs and norms, 'localized gender issues'. Efforts should be made to educate our society about the harmful practices while maintaining and supplementing the positive practices.

We might be ridiculed if we preach gender equality to a rural housewife who has to get up early in the morning to fetch water; we might be out of context if we tell a traditional husband that he has to help out with the house chores. Localizing the gender issue should be in accordance with a particular society's need and demand and cultural values.

We have come a long way wherein some societies, women's place has revolutionized from family leadership to a country's representative and leader. Women all over the world, who supported and are still supporting the gender equality, have to be proud of these achievements. It is an admirable achievement made in terms of gender equality. But the fact is

women have been leaders throughout history. They have led a family, they have brought consolation to men, they have counseled leaders to effectively utilize their leadership, they have led an army to war and they have supplied food and water. They might not have received the admiration and respect from the man but it does not mean that they have not been respected and recognized for the role that they had played.

### **1.3 Objective of the Study**

This study preliminarily focuses on the role of women in a society. It attempts to generally illustrate that men recognize the potential of women by comparing and contrasting the selected novels through feminist views drawn from various scholars. The study tries to show that men not only recognition and acceptance women's potential but also respect them for it.

The study attempts to show that men recognize and respect the role of women in a society. The research tries to illustrate that even in traditional societies women are regarded with respect for their sensible advice and leading roles. The striking features of stereotypical portrayal of women characters as presented in selected literary works, which I believe is the reflection of African society, would be entertained to further strengthen the aim of the study. The contributions of women in the selected novels have made in their respective societies are believed to substantiate the objective of the study.

The study also tries to criticize feminist concepts that indicate men are in total ignorance of a woman's value. The study attempts to describe that women are considered as a strong partner in a society as portrayed in the characters of the selected novels. The study will also show that women have equally participated in various struggles and that men acknowledge

and appreciate their involvement. The study is intended to shed some light on gender studies in addressing actual problems of women which, should be based on respective societies. In relation to this, the study would include women's immense potential that may contribute its part to empowering women.

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

Feminist studies and movements have come a long way to achieve gender equality. Much of the analysis made on the subject focuses on men's wrong doing over the centuries. Feminist critics have criticized male writers on the use of language and character portrayal. I strongly believe that it is time to divert the movement to development endeavors.

This study would be significant to a development of traditional nations like Ethiopia. The portrayal of women in the selected novels would help to highlight the potential of women. The strong women characters in the novels would help influence the women in our society to live up to their potential. The study intends to bring about a change in the misconception of stereotypical portrayal of women.

The 'localization' of gender issues would help people of a society to view a foreign concept from their point of view. Rationalizing a new concept and presenting the logic behind the concept would be more applicable rather than merely stating the fact that each traditional society oppresses women and that they should stand up for their rights. Designing the gender issues in accordance with a society's custom would be beneficial for the society and gender activists.

The study would help to revoke the misconception of the gender issues in our country. I also believe that gender theories should be 'localized' in such a way that they would be favorable to a particular society's culture and norm to create a productive African society without enforcing the customs of westerners. I hope that this study would shed some light on creating comradeship among the society members irrespective of their gender to fully participate in development activities.

### **1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study**

The study is based on the analysis of feminist theories and their applicability to African society. The study includes various scholars' views of women and the feminist movement.

Though the selected two writers from South Africa and Ghana have written several novels and short stories, I have chosen *A Wreath for Udomo (1956)*, *A Night of Their Own (1965)*, *Why Are We So Blest? (1974)*, and *The Healers (1979)*, for their traditional themes and feministic views. The novels were written in various times and have various settings but the fact that both writers have chosen to bring out the prevalence of traditional customs and the influence that women have, serves the objective of the study.

Unfortunately, first hand information of the society and the authors has been found to be difficult to acquire. Thus, the study has to rely on second hand information from the internet, respective Embassy records and through contact persons. Nonetheless, the contacts I have made with the South Africa and Ghana Embassies have not been fruitful. They were

not fully equipped to supply the relevant information that I had sought for.

The research would be of utmost importance if sociological studies are made on the topic. It would have been more productive with a survey of sample areas. Survey conducted on the relationship of women and men in a selected area would have a better result in analyzing women's activities and their involvement in development activities. Due to various constraints, a sociological survey was not conducted to substantiate the study.

### **1.6 Method of Data Collection**

The data collection basically focuses on published and unpublished materials on the subject areas. The study relies on materials found in libraries and web sites.

### **1.7 Application of the Results**

The study would help re-examine men-women relationship in literary works from a different perspective.

'Localization' of the feminist theory and gender issues in accordance with the needs and wishes of a particular society is vital for that society to clearly distinguish the aim of the movement and the position of the activists. The localization of the theory would create awareness without estranging the culture and norm of the society. It would enable women to realize their potential and confidently participate in social activities in harmony with their male partners.

The researcher believes that the study would enable especially, Ethiopian women realize their potential and act upon it so that they would become active participants in the development endeavor of the country. It is also intended to magnify the positive relationship that women and men have in African societies.

The study would also serve to indicate that we can learn a lot from the traditional ways of our society. Though there are some harmful practices in a traditional society, the positive legacies should be kept intact to transfer them to the next generation.

### **1.8 Organization of the Study**

The study is organized in such a way that it would best illustrate the relationship of women and men in African societies. The study has incorporated various views of women and their role in the society. In the literature review I have integrated religious, philosophical, feministic and psychological views of women and some of the strong women in history.

The analysis chapter includes women's role in a society as described in the selected texts. Women characterized by two African male writers are portrayed as strong and influential. I have tried to analyze their role as revolutionaries, sole companions to their men, as temptresses and the men providing care and support for their women.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Feminist Movements and Theories**

Women for centuries have suffered all kinds of abuse and oppression. There have been various mistreatments in their day-to-day activities. The discriminations they faced in domestic, cultural, religious and other sectors of their societies has led them to rebellion and feminist movements.

Women have been considered as the weaker link in the society. They were considered as having no role in the economic and social development of the society. Their presence has been taken as conceiving and rearing of children that would later form a society. The women's role was solely, to take care of their spouse, who played a major part in the social activities, and fulfill the man's needs by bringing up children. In some societies they were also considered as a person to be presented in their husband's social activities.

Women in some societies, who had an opportunity to be educated almost as much as men, who had the opportunity to read various books written by men, were the first to say no to the male-dominated society. They argued that women too have a lot to contribute to a society and they proved it by writing novels and short stories; and by participating in public affairs. Though they faced with abuse, harassment and rejection from their society and families, they stood up for what they believed in.

Primary examples of these strong women are Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, Virginia Woolf and Buchi Emecheta, among many more. The initiative taken by strong women and their struggle led the society to re-

examine the ways of the male dominated society. Their struggle paved the way for various theories and movements of women.

I have tried to cite some of these feminist theories to indicate that the various interpretations derived from the theories do not usually address the oppressed women and their struggle to survive in the male dominated society they live in.

The first feminist that I have reviewed is Sara Mills who has studied on feminist stylistic criticism:

Feminism (or, more accurately, feminisms) is difficult to define because of the many different kinds of feminism which exist today...Most feminists hold a belief that women as a group are treated oppressively as differently from men and that they are subject to personal and institutional discrimination. Feminism implies commitment to changing the social structure to make it less oppressive to women, and, for that matter, to men....Feminism sets itself in opposing to the kind of academic work which aims to mystify the uninitiated, to enable others, to equip women with the skills and knowledge they need or want. (Mills, 4)

As Mills pointed out 'Feminism' is a sensitive subject to define. Mills has tackled it in relation to equal learning opportunity. While she indicates that the discipline should address the social structure or system that is oppressive not only to women but also to men. Mills, furthermore, points out that discrimination also arises from institutions. Feminism, in her interpretation, is a movement against institutional structures that are oppressive to both men and women.

Different disciplines and individuals have shaped the feminist theory in various ways. Some of the theories have been extreme in their stance, while some have taken it as a tool to have a revenge on men, and some have shaped it to serve their political preferences.

Materialist and post modern feminists bring the existence of gender categories themselves into question, arguing that 'women' and 'men' are social categories defined in relation to each other rather than on the basis of a pre-social biological essence. While sharing this radically anti-essentialist position, they differ in their mode of analysis. Materialist feminists emphasize social structural relations, treating men and women as social groups founded upon unequal, exploitative relationships, while post-modern feminists emphasize cultural expansions, seeing 'men' and 'women' as discursively constructed categories (Jackson etal, 135)

Both Materialist and post-modern feminists have tried to give explanations as to the position of 'Men' and 'Women'. In my opinion they have further strengthened the theory that one is stronger than the other. The Materialists put it as 'exploitative relationship' by which both men and women unequally exploit each other. From this interpretation of a relationship it is clear that men take the lion's share.

Post-modern feminists on their part have turned to cultural explanations. Cultural ways in which, most of the time, male dominance is advocated. These 'discursively constructed categories' benefit men more than they do women. In a society where it is culturally defined that a woman's role is to rear a child and serve her man, this discursive category be not be found logical.

Contemporary feminists revolve more on the social and cultural oppression of women. They advocate for a society that is free of sexual differentiation. In my opinion it is difference in sex, with all its advantages and disadvantages that forms a fascinating society. If all society members think like a man or like a woman the merits and demerits of each sex would vanish resulting in a sex-free society.

The contemporary feminists have tried to address the oppression of women from the grass-root level.

... Feminist incorporates diverse ideas which share three major perceptions: that gender is a social construction which oppresses women more than men; that patriarchy shapes this construction; and that women's experiential knowledge is a basis for a future non sexist society. These assumptions inform feminism's double agenda: the task of critique (attacking gender stereotypes) and the task of construction. Without this second task (sometimes called feminist praxis) feminism has no goal. (Jackson etal, 194)

The contemporary feminists categorize the discrimination of women into three sections. This is practiced, in my opinion, to try to define the source of the discrimination and as a means of addressing the root of the problem. It is indicated that society oppresses women more than men, which implies that to some extent men also face oppression. It further states that well-informed women are crucial in a bid to create a just society. These feminists advocate that creating a woman's awareness of the situation they are in would help build their potential and create a better tomorrow for the women.

The present research's concern lies in the kind of knowledge that is provided to women. I am concerned if the knowledge of men's oppression over the past years suffices. The knowledge provided should not indicate that women should abandon their social and cultural roles in order to exercise their newly found gender equality. I strongly believe that further explanation should be forwarded, for these views are open for scrutiny.

Mary Maynard ( as cited in Jackson etal,1998), in her analysis of feminist theory in the 'Changing Nature of Feminist Theory in Women's Studies', has summed up the various forms of feminist theories. She indicates that there are three categories of feminism that explain women's social

situation. Based on their designated doctrines each has its own historical and traditional legacy.

... liberal feminism, is depicted as focusing on individual rights and on the concept of equality, justice and equal opportunities...;marxist feminism- is identified by a concern with women's oppression as it is tied to forms of capitalist exploitation of labor, ... ;racial feminism is 'radical' because, unlike the previous two, it eschews existing theoretical frameworks and attempts to formulate new ways of theorizing women's relationship to men. (Jackson, 253)

Mary Maynard has analyzed feminist theories and has come up with their flaws. Even the most logically considered feminist theories do not directly address to women's needs. Women do not need to despise men; they do not want their contribution in their domestic commitments to be valued in terms of money as the Marxists advocate, nor is it necessarily the knowledge of what they are missing out in the men's world. It is the appreciation and recognition of the valuable domestic or professional contribution that is desired. The recognition and acceptance of women's valuable role would build their confidence to actively participate in social affairs.

I share Mary Maynard's view in that feminist theories are emphasized more on how men have oppressed them and not much is said on how to solve the problems. She explains that, men's social control of women through various mechanisms of patriarchy is emphasized. She further indicates that men are considered as the sole factor for the violence, reproduction problems and confining women to domestic activities.

These oppressions are imposed on women by the social network through man. Man is more of the implementer of the socially and culturally set rules. Mary Maynard implies that feministic views have to be closely

studied before they are to be applied in a society. She indicates that new theories should be developed that redefine and inform of peaceful coexistence of man and woman in society.

Ketu H. Kantrak is quoted by Bruce King in 'The New National and Post-Colonial Literature' for his insight in localizing feminism:

Today, it is commonly accepted that feminisms are historically, culturally, and geographically specific. This does not eliminate hegemonic tendencies in certain schools of feminism that continue to be universalist, perhaps not overtly, but subtly, and hence more dangerously, and in spite of the challenges of Black and Third World feminist theorists. To respect various cultures and voices and to hear their perspectives and needs, are still uphill struggles. (King, 236)

Kantrak indicates that universalizing feminism based on a certain society's analysis can have a hazardous consequence. He advocates that for feminist theories to be applicable in a Third World society, they have to be designed in such a way that they comply with the regions, needs and culture. Feminist moves have to be in correlation with a society's needs.

It is also indicated that it would be out of context to apply western feministic and gender issues to a society that is in poverty and struggling to survive. It would be pointless to introduce these views to a society that is strongly bound by traditional ways.

## **2.2 Stereotypical Views of Women**

In this section I will try to bring forth some of the philosophical, religious, cultural and mythological portrayals of women. I have found it to be natural to begin with the 'Genesis', from the views on the creation of mankind and the respective roles of man and women.

### **2.2.1 Religious views**

From the beginning of human history, right after the creation of Adam and Eve, man has tried to justify the role of women in the world. Various religions and religious leaders have forwarded their definition on the role of women and the purpose of their creation.

These religious leaders have the influence on people's perception. Starting from the time when religious leaders were feared and respected, people have learned to obey their command, and they are known to give advice to kings and queens. These religious leaders are known to set sociological rules and norms in accordance with their religious beliefs. These beliefs mostly interpret women as inferior by nature and oblige them to be subservient to men.

I have found it relevant to indicate the view of these religious groups in regard to women. What I have found to be fascinating is that most of them despise and infuriate women in fear of the potential and influence women possess, as compared to men:

... By virtue of her secondary creation, that is, of the merely derivative character of her existence described in the earlier Genesis account, woman could justifiably be considered naturally inferior and subordinate to man. Created out of man and for man,

to relieve his loneliness and to help him, woman is shown to be responsible also for man's troubles, not the least of which is his loss of immortality (Agonito, 18)

As quoted by Agonito, though a woman is created out of man, she is nevertheless created to help man and keep him company. It is implied in this quotation that a woman's purpose in life is not to serve man as some would put it, rather to help him in whatever way her help is needed. This, I believe, does not limit her to the domestic chores alone. Though Agonito was chauvinist enough to put the blame of a man's mistake on women, he has nevertheless acknowledged indirectly her input in a man's life.

### 2.2.2 Philosophical Views

Some of the philosophers' views entail that women are cunning and have the potential to influence men. Some, even if they honor the maternal status that women have, are wary of their potentials. Philosophers have for centuries tried to define and redefine women and their role in the society. It seems that, they were mainly reasoning out ways of prohibiting women from participating in public affairs.

Philosopher, St Paul a missionary at Corinth, Greece on the entry entitled; 'The Relationship of Man and Women', states:

As regards the status of women in the church, Paul adheres to the traditional Jewish practice of enforcing woman's subordinate position, her sexuality to ensnare men. He relies heavily on the Genesis account of the creation and fall of man to support his pronouncements....Jesus treated women as persons, frequently in a context that startled onlookers. There is evidence, consistent with Jesus' example, that women played an important part in the earliest days of the new church, even to engaging in such evangelical work as teaching the faith and converting large number

to Christianity. Whatever his reasons, Paul explicitly objected to this new turn... (Agonito, 67-68)

Paul admits to the temptress power that a woman has. He indicates that if a woman is given an opportunity to be regarded as a man's equal, it would have a disastrous consequence for the man. His fear is that, a woman's sexuality, which can not be resisted by a man, may lead a man's soul and body into transgression.

Paul, like many other religious leaders and followers, stood against the equal participation of women in superficial and sacred religious activities. Religious leaders like Paul justify that, the fact that woman has menstrual cycle and the burden of giving birth indicated that she is being punished for her impurity. Even in Ethiopia, it is my experience that a woman is forbidden to enter an orthodox temple when she is having her monthly cycles. Hence, views such as this can be considered as the cause for the root of women's problems. The oppression starts with leaders that people fear and look up to.

It seems Paul is not the only philosopher concerned of a woman's sexually captivating power. Under the title 'Women as Auxiliary and Subject of Man' Augustine describes a woman's role in life as being a temptress or a mother.

In Augustine's account women emerge in the three-fold role of temptress, wife, and mother, all of which emphasize her instrumental status in human society. As temptress, woman is the instrument of her husband who oversees the ordered peacefulness of the family; and as mother, woman is the instrument of God's creativity. Depending on the use to which she allows herself to be put, woman is variously damned or blessed. As a member of the earthly city, where she functions in her perverted role as sex object, she is damned; in the divine city, where she functions in her

natural role as helpmate serving her husband and ministering to her children, she is blessed (Agonito, 74)

Augustine indicates that if a woman plays a role of a temptress and there by influencing the mind and body of a man then she will be doomed for eternity. On the other hand, if a woman is subservient and obeys the rules of the male oriented society, by rearing children and causing no threat to a man, she will be considered as a good woman and be blessed. This view establishes the position that men, even then, were fearful of a woman's potential.

Augustine has also stated that, a woman as a mother is the instrument of God's creativity. What I believe they also need to consider is that may be it is God's creative instrument that allowed woman to have a sexual influence over man. As far as I have observed there is no message from God for a man to condemn a woman for this power. It is the misinterpreted preaching of religions, disguising facts to serve their convenience.

Bristow quoted philosopher Otto Weininger, who states that a woman has the potential of becoming a mother and a prostitute.

...dividing femininity into angelic and demonic, virtuous and vicious types implying, ... Weininger hurtles towards the drastic conclusion that men are constantly in danger from the devouring passions of all women, since not even respectable females can suppress their inexhaustible eroticism...she is also said to weaken the man by manipulating his vulnerable sexual instincts. (Bristow, 42)

Weininger states that a woman can be both angelic and vicious. He further states of 'respectable females', is respect valued by natural instincts. As if men were not thirstier when it comes to sex. David Bass

(Kelly, 1998) indicates that a woman is naturally equipped with a more desirous sexual flavor than men. As Bass states that a woman has more sexually appealing power, but she doesn't have to hide her natural beauty and eroticism to gain respect, however it might be useful when under stressful condition.

It is not only Weininger but also other scholars, as we have seen earlier, that indicate women should tone down their sexuality because they are tempting to men. (If men are tempted why don't these scholars try to come up with a study for men to control their desires?) God created women with that potential for a reason and women should not be criticized for making use of their natural potentials. If a woman sees fit to use her tempting power then it is up to her to decide and not men.

While dealing with kinds of pleasure and their relation to beauty and sublimity, Immanuel Kant in an essay entitled 'Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime' in 1764 (Agonito, 129) has stated that there lies a specific trait in a woman that makes her appealing to a man. Kant indicates that a man can be possessed by a woman's charm. A woman's charm is one of the potentials that philosophers admit that a woman possesses.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century where a woman's look was considered her merit, Kant while praising the beauty of a woman, states a woman's secret magic. A woman has the capacity to overwhelm a man with passion that provokes a man to make judgments in her favor.

Weininger concludes his view by stating that a man should be aware of a woman's potential. That one should not underestimate a woman or try to control her because there is no way of telling what a woman is thinking.

He proceeds by stating, 'be careful, for a woman can have the power to enslave you (the man)'. Although Bristow argues that it is a drastic conclusion, I tend to agree, as a woman, with the philosopher that men are constantly in danger of women's potential, if the woman chooses to exercise it.

To further elaborate my position that men realize that women could have a strong influence over them; I have cited Bacon's theory:

....The ultimate check on women's influence, of course, was to avoid them altogether. This position is implicit in Bacon's preference for the single life, which follows the tradition of Paul that celibacy, the avoidance of contact with woman, particularly sexual contact, is the ideal state. Greatness of mind or soul are not with the animal strings of sexuality. Furthermore the private troubles and concerns brought by wives and children distract men from their public work sapping their intellectual and material resources. While woman is not totally without merit for Bacon - she provides occasion for man to develop discipline and tenderness - nonetheless men are best advised to avoid the married state altogether. Ironically, even the respectable role woman is allowed to play, that of wife and mother, ultimately is a burden to man. (Agonito, 91-92)

Bacon's theory indicates that a woman is a distractive tool that hinders a man from his social activities and deprives him of his intelligent resources. He states that a wife and children are to be avoided at all cost. But it is a fact of life that, a man's success is measured by how well he provides for his family. A family that gives full meaning to life and existence, building a generation that would in turn take over the world. These distractive tools, as Bacon puts it are the true meaning of existence. After all, most religious people agree that God created woman to help man in life.

There is a saying 'Behind every successful man there is a strong woman.' A woman in my opinion is the backbone of a man's success and the texts that I have analyzed will further strength my point.

Bacon has taken St Paul's role of a woman to the extreme. St Paul stated that a woman should be a mother to be acceptable while Bacon indicates that even a wife and a mother; she still is a distraction to an intellectual man because of her sexuality. Bacon states that sexual contact with women should be avoided, may be it is because a woman has exceptional power over man when it comes to sexual interaction. The sexual influence women have over men would be discussed later on in this chapter.

Thomas Hobbes, on the other hand describes the vital role that women play in an article 'Maternity and the Origin of Political Power'.

By nature, he says dominion is maternal for two reasons- the identity of a child's mother alone is certain, and power over a child is initially in the hands of the mother who nourishes and trains it. As for natural right by brute force, Hobbes insists that by nature everyone is equal in the ability to overpower another, if not by superior physical strength, then by wit or cunning; hence the male cannot claim a greater right to lordship than the female on this score (Agonito, 95-96)

Hobbes' analysis reminds me of a slogan that is put up recently 'educating a woman is educating a society'. A mother's contribution to a society, as Hobbes put it is of greater importance. Even when a woman is left to tend to domestic chores, she is nurturing the future generation. He further adds that though physical strength is subjective, the power of wit and cunning, the power to influence the mind belongs to the woman.

The other scholar that admits to a woman's wit is Friedrich Nietzsche. It is stated in a manner of a dialogue between him and a young woman. I have included most of the conversation for I have found it to be intriguing.

' Everything concerning woman is a puzzle, and everything concerning woman has one solution: it is named pregnancy.'

'For woman, man is a means, the goal is always the child. However what is a woman for a man?

'The real man wishes for two things: danger and recreation. Hence man wants woman as the most dangerous plaything. Man should be brought up for the purpose of war and woman for the relaxation of the soldier: everything else is foolish...

'Let a woman be a plaything, pure and simple as a priceless gem reflecting the virtues of a world which is not yet here.....

'Let man be afraid of a woman when she loves: for then she brings every offering, and every other thing appears worthless to her.

'Let man be afraid of woman when she hates: for man in the depth of his soul is evil, but a woman is base in her soul.....' (Agonito, 267)

Nietzsche indicates in the dialogue that a man at war needs a woman by his side even if he finds that women are a very dangerous thing to play with. He has indicated that a man is like a child who wants to play with fire. He states that a man even in the dark of what a woman is thinking, it is in his nature to gamble, to take a risk for the ultimate pleasure.

Friedrich Nietzsche has also indicated that a woman is a puzzle indeed, because a man may try to understand a woman all his life and fail unless a woman wishes it to be so. I think this is one of the advantages that a woman can have over a man. I don't believe that a woman should be deceiving but that she should not be easy to be manipulated. As it is indicated in the above dialogue women and men need each other to survive, woman as a creator and man as a protector.

When we look at all these philosophers and their views they seem to be really unsettled by women. They have tried to impose on a woman's disposition; they have tried to warn men against them and they have even marked what is to be respectable and what not. The underlining factor for all of these is that they believe that if a woman is given equal opportunity as men, and if she is not constantly put in her place she might turn out to be a greater opponent for a man.

### 2.2.3 Psychological views

The psychological views would help in further elaborating the stated religious and philosophical ideas about women. Various disciplines address the subject in diverse ways and the various views are believed to strengthen the underlining issue of women's portrayal and the logic behind it.

Carol Gilligan, (as cited in Walsh, 1987) based on Chodorow's description of sex role and socialization, has forwarded her analysis in, 'In a Different Voice'.

According to Gilligan, developmental theories depict men as advancing to more mature levels of moral reasoning than women. Gilligan argues that women do reason in a different, but not less mature, way than men. More specifically, women see morality as a matter of care and relationships, while men view moral issues in terms of a system of law or impartial justice (Walsh, 10)

Gilligan interprets the man-woman relationship in terms of their reasoning. She distinguishes them in the way they interact with their surrounding and towards each other.

Gilligan's psychological view of man's and woman's morality describes their differing merits. She states that though men and women have their separate ways of approaching/relating to their environment, it does not entail that one is greater or better than the other.

Feminists have also voiced concern over what effect studies like Gilligan's, which focus on sex differences, will have on the political advancement of women. Whether or not Gilligan's conclusion can be used to support traditional sex-role stereotypes, it is clear that her work contrasts sharply with that of feminist psychologists of the 1970s who developed concepts such as androgyny to minimize the significance of sex differences (Walsh, 275)

I share the concern of these feminists. Their concern has come from the interrelation theory that Gilligan has developed, by stating that women relate to morality to care and relationship while men relate to a system of law. This concept makes the equal involvement of women and men in political affairs of a nation questionable. It might indicate that women are naturally made to care while men are made to rule. The movement and propaganda that the feminists have been making for decades can be submerged in this theory.

Woman may be caring but that does not mean that they have to be limited to motherhood alone; a nation also needs a caring leader. We can observe developed nations who value their leaders on how they care for their families. A caring mother can also be a caring leader.

Pointing out the difference has already been accomplished by many scholars. Women in the world need to build up their undermined confidence. They have to be told of their merits, their strong sides that they are afraid to show for fear of failure. As Gilligan indicates women should be encouraged to show their hidden potential.

A psychologist, David M. Buss, in his study 'The Strategies of Human Mating' has stated the strong side of a woman that she can utilize if she wishes to do so.

It turns out that a woman's physical appearance is the most powerful predictor of the occupational status of the man she marries. A woman's appearance is more significant than her intelligence, her level of education or even her original socio economic status in determining the mate she will marry. Women who possess the qualities men prefer are most able to translate their preferences into actual mating decisions. Similarly, men possessing what women want-the ability to provide resources-are best able to mate according to their preferences (Kelly, 213).

In Buss's analysis we see the intertwined existence of men and women. In this world a woman or a man searches for a specific quality in the other. In the case of a woman he states that it is not so much her intellectual ability that makes a woman appealing to a man but her physical appearance, though I would like to add that now-a-days a woman with a hefty pocket is most desired.

A man as he has stated is selected on how well he can provide for a woman, regardless of his appearance. When we regard both cases, they have equal opportunity to select their partner to marry. If a woman wishes to marry a certain person she can either reveal her femininity, flaunt her money or show her personality and the same applies to the man, but without advantage of the 'femininity'. A woman is known to have sexual influence over men and Buss has further elaborated this fact.

I forwarded this analysis to help establish my study that women have the potential to influence in their relationship with men. They can have a say in domestic affairs. They could resolve disagreements that might excel to violence using this potential. It is heard almost daily of women and girls

being raped, may be it is time for women to try wit instead of force to get out of unfortunate circumstances.

Martina Horner has based her study on women's fear for success as follows:

In the early 1960s she became interested in why female subjects did not express the type of achievement imagery found in the responses of male subjects. On the basis of her findings, she theorized that women have a motive to avoid success in achievement - related situations because they expect negative consequences such as social rejection (1968). Horner made it clear that she was not saying that women wanted to fail but rather that, in achievement situations, they were caught in a double bind, having to worry not only about failure but also about success(Horner, 1972) in (Walsh, 165).

The study that Horner made is a clear indication of the mental torture that women of every culturally bound society go through. It is an indication that women could not freely speak their ideas, try new things or engage with confidence in a male-dominated society. Horner points out why women fear to achieve and even succeed in competing in a male dominated society.

The women that she studied have shown her that women would rather go in the shadow than publicly showing their success. It might be attributed to the fear of entering unfamiliar environment of the male oriented society.

My study would try to bring out women's potential and thereby contribute its part in building their self-esteem to confidentially contribute to their respective societies. It would help the struggle towards breaking the barrier of gender discrimination. It would have a significant part in the process of empowering women.

## 2.2.4 Legendary Women

An account of legendary women is appropriate in this context. The strength and will of these women and their achievement would be an inspiration to the women of our generation. The cause of the fight of feminists would be justified and the true fight of women for equality of gender would be brought to the surface in such an account.

Charlotte Bronte, who was brought up in a prejudiced society of England, has done her share in contributing novels that introduced women's potential (Shattack, 1987). Bronte, learning from Jane Austin's mistakes, published her first book with a name considered by the general public as a man's.

Charlotte proved to the male dominated society that a novel written by a man, was acceptable but a brilliant work found to be that of a woman was considered as a disgrace:

...wrote Jane Eyre as Currer Bell, a gender neutral name (Mai 1985). Initially, Bell was considered to be a male and his novel praised as strong and forceful. However, once it was discovered that it was Bronte in fact who had written the novel, reviews began to appear which described the style in strongly negative terms.... (Mills, 64)

This indicates that Charlotte had shown that women could be really good writers. The appearance of the reviews only shows the nature of the prejudiced society that she was living in. Under the circumstances Charlotte became an inspiration for many women writers ever since, by bringing out the hidden potential of women.

It is this kind of struggle that led the pioneers of feminism to initiate the movement. The question then had been to have equal opportunity to

learn and participate in public affairs as men do. The women of Bronte's society faced discrimination during their time. They had the opportunity to learn and the ability to publish books and yet the men completely denied them this opportunity.

This struggle that started with that particular society does not necessarily apply to other societies. Different societies have their own customs and discrimination, and in some societies we also see women's involvement going to the extent of leadership, women's war of Nigeria can be cited as an example.

Women over centuries have fought alongside men though their contribution was demeaned by men. They have been known for their strategic advice, their emotional support and strength. One such woman in Ethiopian history is Empress Taitu. Consider the following passage:

When, during their negotiations, it appeared that Emperor Menilik was about to make concessions to the Italians, the empress reportedly stood firm against any compromises with Italy....As a matter of fact Italian negotiators seemed convinced that the possibility of any compromise with Ethiopia had become impracticable. Hence, they placed the responsibility of "any rapture with Italy" on the shoulders of the empress. Indeed 'this stubborn woman', as one Italian diplomat described the empress, had become a thorn in the flesh of the Italians. Not only did she put pressure on her husband not to make any concessions to Italy, but she insisted that no diplomatic courtesies should be accorded to the Italians in any diplomatic correspondence with them (James, 100).

Through this historical figure, we can see that women have been powerful enough to intimidate foreign enemies who wanted to take advantage of a nation. She has proven the power of the nation and thereby her strength in leading a country besides her husband.

The most fascinating part of Taitu's story is that it occurred in the same century that women like Brontë were voicing their rights. Thus, indicating the point that the discrimination of one society does not necessarily apply to the other. Since Taitu was in a way leading a country while some European women were struggling for their voices to be heard. It is motivating to women of all nations to hear about such kind of women.

Eastern Nigerian women are marked for their strong resistance in preserving their tradition against Christian missionaries in the 1840s. (James et al, 1999) The missionaries who considered Eastern Nigerians as pagans, preached against societal customs and practices such as polygamy and the killing of twins among others. The missionaries were caught by surprise by the resistance they faced from women. The Presbyterian missionary Reverend H.M. Waddell is quoted by V.U. James et al:

...[But] To our surprise, the greater opposition we met came from a quarter from whence it was least expected, the women themselves...Preaching on Christ the light of the world, I referred... particularly[to] infanticide as beyond most bad customs unnatural, above most crimes heinous and unaccountable...But the elderly ladies of the town...murmured and contradicted us... (James, 98)

The women of Eastern Nigeria have fought for the conservation of their tradition. Their fight might be considered as primitive, as something morally and humanitarily shocking. That might be true, but the point of the matter remains that they fought strongly for what they believed in. When talking about women of Nigeria, the women's war of 1929 is something to light up every woman's heart.

From this extract, we can infer that women are generally more bound to culture than men. The women did not want to change their ways even

though the men were optimistic about it. Women like Empress Taitu have shown their strength in fighting the Europeans for what they believed in.

Though the African women have been known for their strength in struggle, some modern African men are voicing their concern of the feminist views. Consider the following:

At a symposium on African literature, male writers like Taban Liyong spoke about feminism as a declared war by African women against African men: 'I think I should appeal to us to keep the African household intact at the end of the day otherwise we may have our younger sisters going off and joining in dances in Lapland which concern the people of Lapland only' (King, 240).

The setbacks of feminism as I perceive is the regionalization. It needs to be redefined so that men like Taban Liyong do not have the misconception. It needs to be redefined in such a way that it fits a particular society's culture and norm.

I agree with Taban's concern that feminism in Africa is taking a totally different direction than it was originally intended. Women in our society are viewing feminist movement and gender equality as an opportunity to get back at men. The concepts of feminism and gender equality should be further elaborated for it to become functional in developing nations.

Mulumbet Zenebe in her Master's Study "A Comparative Analysis of the Images of Men and Women in the Works of Some Ethiopian Writers" she has indicated women's attitude towards men in the society. She has indicated that women are taken as victims.

In most of the works the women characters are favoured by the writers. The feelings of the men characters are not given due

attention. Without sufficient reason, the women become successful, while the men fail in life. The writers try to cover the naivety of the women characters by putting all the blame on the men and the culture. While emphasizing on the themes of their respective stories,...” (Mulumebet Zenebe, 1996).

Mulumebet’s study indicates that the women writers are under the impression that women’s life should be rewarded by faith while men suffer. In the study it is also indicated that the men suffer the consequence of their actions for the rest of their lives. And some male characters are led to their death for the same reason. The women writers of her study seem to indicate the biased attitude they have towards men.

The characterizations in these texts might lead us to believe that the women writers are against male prosperity and good fortune. They indicate to the reader that men should face misfortune from the supernatural force if they do women wrong. Instead of indicating the men that respect and look up to women in the society, their male character selection leads us to believe that no good is expected of a man. There are men in the society that advocate women’s rights and that accept the involvement of women in development.

For women to have an equal part in development as men, the society has to accept the potential of women. The concept has to be made clear that these studies are not made to antagonize men but rather to work in harmony with men. The society that best understands it is expressed by its leaders.

There are compelling reasons why African women must be integrated in the development process. First is their numerical strength. They are industrious and enterprising....they are good managers...No national programmes will be meaningful and thorough if women are not fully involved.(James, 96) [President Ibrahim Babangida of Nigeria in 1989]

The Nigerian president has confirmed the significant role that women can play in a country's development endeavor. The women of Africa have a lot of potential to contribute to their country. African nations need all the assistance they can acquire. And it is not in the best interest of a nation to antagonize women and limit their potentials when they can make a huge contribution to the development of a nation.

When gender equality is promoted it should not undermine the social norms as much as possible. The gender studies should be integrated with the cultural and social values of a society. This is because there are a lot of development activities that women can participate in within their social customs.

The women of Nigeria who are known for their strong status in the social and economic affair of their society can be cited as an example of women participating in economic activities.

Apparently, during the early periods, African women had an exalted status as opposed to their European counterparts. ... In south western Nigeria, women's courts were commissioned to impose fines, and women served as market officials regulating prices and mediating between disputing parties (James, 84).

If it is apparent that the history of African women shows that they have been strongly involved in social and economic affairs of their society, where does the discrimination comes from? We have seen African women leading their nation; we have seen them monitoring the economic activity of the nation, then is it possible to say that the discrimination came along with the colonial rule? Is it possible that the prejudiced male-dominated society of Brontë brought it to Africa?

## 2.3 African Writers

African writers have been influenced by colonial rule and the desperate times and have produced remarkable literary works. King (1996) quoted Bhabha as stating that the post-colonial theories have to be reorganized. It needs to be shaped in accordance with the societal needs. Bhabha states that the structure has put aside the cultural values. For the theories to be whole they have to be studied under each society's perspective.

African writers have voiced their opposition to the colonial rule. These writers that have received their education in exile have written about the injustice being done by these colonizers. Chelva Kanganayakam states in the article 'Exile and Expatriates'

The writer as social critic is nothing unusual. What distinguishes the exile is the questioning of fundamental assumptions that concern ontology, of time-honored traditions. The dilemma of being bound to the world view that one is born into but also being able to transcend its constraints is the perspective afforded by the cusp of exile. And that could involve the political, the social or the personal and sexual (King, 210).

It is the exile writers as Kanganayakam puts it who perceived the value and honor of tradition. They have analyzed the western theories in terms of their culture and come up with their opinion. They describe the strong cultural structure in their works. They indicate that even in their traditional societies there exists a structure that has a hierarchy, respect and trust. These writers describe in their works that the women have a major role in their society's activities.

The African writers that I have selected are in line with this kinds of writers. They have described the social values and the importance of their tradition in their works.

Under the title *Ayi Kwei Armah's Claim of African Lives Destruction: with reference to Two Thousand Seasons*, Tewedaj Kebede (1998, 1) has studied the efforts made by African writers, with special reference to Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons*, to indicate the reason behind the losses of economic, political, religious and social independence of Ghana.

The approach Tewedaj has taken is quite different from that of mine; however, we have both based our studies on similar writers. He has reviewed and come up with a conclusion that the colonizers are manipulating Africa's resources. He indicated that the aftermath the colonizers have left us with is still vivid and we should work together to restore the previous peace and stability in the nation.

The other study that I have managed to find is Deneke Assaye's (1982, 3) thesis on 'Socio-Literacy Study of Five African Countries'. The five countries including writers like Ayi Kwei Armah and Peter Abrahams among others. He has surveyed the socio-economic conditions of these countries to find out their relation with the writer's literary production. He states that, "...sum up the problems of the African writer and will forward alternative suggestions to indicate the direction African literature and the writer should follow to be of active help to solve African social, economic and political problems." (Deneke, 1982). Deneke has dealt with the social, economic and political problems that African writers face.

Chukukere states in *Gender Voices and Choices: Rendering Women in Contemporary African Fiction* that it would be erroneous to conclude that

all male writers antagonize women in their works. Some African writers have created women characters that are heroic and are sometimes found influencing men. These women characters are found participating in revolutionary activities as much as men. One such a writer is Peter Abrahams:

...Peter Abrahams creates women who act beyond their roles as wives and mothers to reflect their political awareness. Through group solidarity, the women in *Gods Bits of Wood* challenge the forces of law and the exploitative agencies of the French government; in *A Wreath for Udomo*, an echo of their solidarity is intimated through Mehendi's tragic bereavement (Chukukere, 91).

As we shall see in the next chapter Abrahams has portrayed strong and influential women in his works. In the societies that he has created the women are considered as a power to be recognized with, their influence is observed both in the domestic and social circles.

The other African writer that I have selected, Armah, has written his life experience in a way that portrays women's influence and dedication. As he was a teacher himself he has written about the *Healers* whom we find as a teacher who inspires his students to be logical and do the right thing. The Healer's attitude towards women is so positive that he goes so far as letting his wife leave with his child. Armah who is a revolutionist, has written inspiring works that motivate the people of Africa; it seems, from his novels that he wanted to revolutionize the stereotype of women.

In short, what I would like to indicate in this chapter is that, it is not the religion or their culture that hinders women from having an equal standing as men but rather the manipulated interpretations of the doctrines for various reasons. Part of the feminist movement towards gender equality should begin in addressing these manipulations that control a society's attitude in a far greater extent.

I would also like to emphasize that the society in general appreciates and acknowledge the contribution of women to the development of a nation. However, the gender studies and feminist ideas that are enforced into the society might bring unforeseen problems.

In the next chapter I would be analyzing the role of women in a society in the novels written by two African male writers.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTED TEXTS**

In this part of the study I would try to illustrate the stereotypical portrayal of women as described in the selected texts. The selected texts written by male authors would be analyzed to illustrate the position the women are given in the specified society.

This study has based itself in bringing out the humane side of men. Men of traditional and modern nature have acknowledged the potential of women. The male characters portrayed by male authors have confided in women for their advice, have sought their company when in despair and they are seen caring for them. The male authors have portrayed women as leaders who play a vital role in the revolutionary movement that the country was in.

The women in these novels play the role, as Augustine (Agonito, 1977) states, of a temptress, wife, and mother. In addition to all these, we see strong women throughout these novels who influence the decision of men.

### **3.1 Synopsis of the Texts**

#### **3.1.1 A Wreath for Udomo**

Udomo, an aspiring revolutionary, peruses his education abroad with a sense of lose. He meets Lois by accident and after hearing his desire to participate in the movement she arranges the meeting between him and his idol, Lanwood. Udomo's enthusiasm and dedication takes them all by surprise. He becomes a member in an instant.

Along the way Udomo falls in love with Lois. Lois is a white woman, though not blessed with an alluring complexion; her intelligent opinions and her understanding have made her more appealing than her beautiful roommate. Men constantly solicit her ideas and the comfort that she brings by being there for them. Though Udomo is in love with Lois, the roommate becomes too tempting for him and makes a mistake of sleeping with her.

In this novel Selina, is a very strong, influential and traditional woman. She is a merchant woman who is economically well off. When Udomo is short of money for his revolutionary campaign he goes to her and she provides him assistance. Besides providing financial assistance, she mobilized the people in riots and provides her advice on the proceedings of the movement.

Though Selina is a woman with modern ideas and equipped with a power of a modern woman she is very traditional in her ways. Right from the beginning, she advises Udomo not to involve foreign people in their internal affairs of their nation. He goes against her advice and makes business deals with white people. This betrayal angers Selina who later organizes his execution in a traditional manner.

### **3.1.2 A Night of Their Own**

Richard Nkosi is a South African who joined the underground movement while studying abroad. His first mission is to smuggle the much needed money to the activists. Through a much organized and highly secretive journey he meets Dr.Nunkhoo, the man behind the underground movement.

The doctor's sister Dee, who has a physical disability takes the responsibility of taking care of their guest and makes sure that no one finds out his presence. His arrival has created quite a stir in the country, leaving the officials to marvel how he passed their tight security. The underground revolutionaries took this as a victory against the ruling party.

Dee and Nkosi grow close and become lovers. Despite her physical deformity, her courage and insight captivates Nkosi. They are seen engaged in attention-grabbing dialogue for a long period of time. Her bright input and wit earns her admiration and respect not only from Nkosi but also from the other male characters as well.

Miss Mildred Scott is the other strong woman that we observe in the text. She is the headmistress of a school and lives a modest life. Her long standing affair with a higher white official, Van As, is kept a secret. He is seen yearning for her company and sneaking to her neighborhood late in the evenings.

### **3.1.4 Why Are We So Blest?**

The story is narrated by Solo, a person living in fear of the world around him. He narrates the story of Modine as written in his diary. As the story progresses, Solo is seen comparing his journey in life with that of Modine.

The time is the colonial period, and the place is in the present day Ghana. There are hungry children begging for money. The turmoil around Solo becomes so intense that he collapses and has to be hospitalized for days from which he gets relief. Solo has been educated abroad and earns a modest salary by working for the Ghanaian government.

Modine is sponsored by Mr. Jefferson, an American official, to study abroad and serve their purpose. During his arrival he meets the secretary of Mr. Jefferson, Naita. They become close and she warns him of the manipulating ways of the white people and, she also warns him of the advantage they may try to take of him. She tries to persuade him to join the struggle with her but he refuses.

Solo has been facing a similar incident. His lover, Silvia, who was to be his fiancé, pleads with him to join the revolution. He did not want to get involved even if it meant losing her. He is seen regretting his decision for the rest of the story.

Modine continues his life in the foreign land without Naita and the advice that she has given him. He gets involved with the wife of his benefactor and faces a near death injury. Even after this fatal incident he gets involved with a white girl, who wouldn't give him peace of mind. She possesses his mind and sole in every way, that she becomes the cause of his death in the end.

### **3.1.3 The Healers**

The place is somewhere in Ghana and the time, sometime in the past. The traditional sporting competition is a popular event where people travel a long way to attend the event. Densu, who is of age to attend the games is confused about the objective of the game and feels pessimistic about it.

Although Densu proves to be the best competitor in the game, his mind was somewhere else. His close encounter and respect for the Healer, Damfo has made him crave to be a healer. He is seen purposefully trying to be defeated and some how he was admired for his skills. This made

Ababio unhappy, who wanted Densu to be the winner and on the king's side. Ababio's desire to be behind the leader whom he can influence, since he did not have the royal blood himself, failed because of this. Appia, the heir to the throne becomes the leader and faces a brutal death at his early age by the discontented Ababio.

Densu goes to the Healers' village and begins the lessons of becoming a healer. While in the forest of the healer, he falls in love with Ajoa, the daughter of Damfo, the healer, and starts to live a satisfied life though the search for him has continued as he is wrongfully accused of the murder of the young king Appia.

As the search team gets closer and the assistance for the healing power of Damfo is needed in a far away land they start the long journey. The warrior, Asamoia Nkwanta, who has not been feeling well since the murder of his nephew by the royal family, is the object of their journey.

Nkwanta finds comfort in Densu for his resemblance to his nephew and involves him in the war that the country is facing. Densu, eager to satisfy the great warrior request executes his orders exceptionally well. With Densu's assistance they found information that is vital for their struggle and win it, with the women playing their part along the way.

### **3.2 Women's role in Movements**

African nations have been involved in various forms of struggle for decades. Pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial struggles have left the continent with a scare that its people are still trying hard to survive.

In the texts that I have selected these survival struggles are vividly depicted. In the struggle that men fought we find strong women standing by their side. Some of these women characters are very much involved in the movement that they are seen making a difference for the cause they stand for.

One of the strong women characters, Selina in *A Wreath for Udomo*, has played a major role in the Pan-African movement that male characters on several occasions have indicated her strong disposition. Consider this passage:

'Tell me about Selina,' Mabi said. 'Haven't heard of her before.'  
'So you've noticed. She's the real power behind us, homeboy. She tells all the women in all the villages what to tell their men, and the men do what the women tell them. Without her we wouldn't have this party.'  
'She's a tribal woman.'  
'We're a tribal nation, Mabi. Without Selina we couldn't have defeated the Council of Chiefs and Elders.' (Abrahams 1956: 226)

Mabi, who has been in Europe to study, is enquiring about this strong woman that everyone is talking about. Selina, who has taken part in the movement from the beginning, has provided financial, strategic and other form of support to the movement. She is portrayed as the real power behind the success of the struggle. She is respected and feared by members of the society. She is portrayed as having the potential to create an uprising.

From the conversation we can also observe that the village women have played their share alongside Selina. It is indicated that the fundamental asset to any struggle, information, has been supplied by these women. The women have gone door to door to provide the position of the opposition and the role expected of each one of the society members.

The conversation further indicates that the men in the society take orders from the women. Selina tells the women what to do and how to do it, and in turn, the women notify the men of what is expected and the men, as stated in the dialogue, comply with their advice.

It might be logical to deduce from this that the success to the riot and thereby the revolutionary movement is due to the cooperative efforts of men and women, or may be because the men were not prejudiced to disregard the women's orders.

It is also clearly stated at the end of the dialogue that without Selina's support the strong rule that the people live by would not have been broken. The tribal nation that is ruled by tribal leaders has to have the consent of these leaders in order to enforce a revolutionary change and in this purpose the tribal woman, Selina, has played her part.

On another occasion we observe Selina's influence over a council of activists and tribal leaders. On page 179, she publicly designates Udomo as leader, chairman and president of the party for the rest of his life and makes the public swear to be loyal to him and the new party, which is followed by a prayer by an elderly person. The prevalence of the traditional custom is amplified throughout the text.

Selina, as she has been the faithful supporter of the designated leader, Udomo, she also becomes the end of him. Selina, a very traditional woman, finds Udomo as a traitor of their ways when he started to invite white business men to deal in the country's affairs and manipulate the country's resources. Udomo is slaughtered in a tribal ritual that has been orchestrated by Selina.

The other strong woman that we observe in this text is Mhendi's wife. She is described as an illiterate woman who has a lot of respect for her husband. After learning of his wife's death in Pluralia, the country that he used to lead, Mhendi describes the event to Lois. "...The women didn't want to give up the homes and lands that had been theirs as far back as our history goes. So they turned on the whites who came to supervise their removal. My wife led the stoning party..." (Abrahams 1956, 26)

The women of Pluralia did not give up their homes easily. While the men of the society encounter defeat the women resorted to stoning the enemy. He indicates that, though his wife and women of his nation were illiterate and might have been considered as a subservient of 'her lord', her husband, they were the ones who strongly resisted the colonial force from overtaking their land.

This incident coincides with the rebellion of Nigerian women (James, 98), women who put up a resistance against the European missionaries. The missionaries, who preach of the inhumane burial of a twin, have managed to convince the men in the society. The strong resistance they faced from the women took them by surprise.

This incident implies that women of Africa have strong attachment to their tradition. Even when the men were ready to change their ways, the women put up a strong resistance. Though the priests at Creek Town assumed that the women were oppressed by being forced to bury their twin child, it was the other way around. It is revealed that the women strongly believe in their traditional ways to change it even if it was for their benefit.

In the above two struggles, though their objectives of struggle are not the same, it is the struggle that counts. The women put up a fight when the men were reluctant or preoccupied. It shows the strong role the women played in the struggle for what they believed in.

The other woman whom we see involved in a struggle is Silvia, in *Why Are We So Blest?* Silvia has chosen to involve herself in a revolutionary movement rather than being with the man she loves. Solo gives up Silvia, reluctant to participate in the movement with her.

...Even in the beginning I had known that at home there would be no peace for long years to come, and I was not among those countrymen of mine who had found in Portugal and in Europe a final home for their spirit. Mine paced uneasily the wide territory between the destroyed people I had left behind and their enslavers, those whose words and ideas and whose art had drawn me with an attraction strong enough at times to make me wish for deafness against the frightening cries of my own doomed people. (Armah 1972: 68)

Solo, though desperately in love with Silvia and strongly desires to be with her, could not summon the courage to stand by her side for the struggle. He voices the turmoil in his home country; he feels the cry of his people and yet chooses to ignore them. Though he does not find peace of mind in the new found home of Europe as the other countrymen do, he chooses to give a deaf ear to the enslaved people's cry.

These doomed people as he aptly puts it were probably the ones who sent him to America to get his education. These people and their expectations and hopes for a difference, for a better tomorrow have been shattered. Silvia has appealed to him to join the struggle that she was a part of on several occasions. He has turned a deaf ear to her, he has resorted to lose her rather than join the struggle. In this event the author

describes the woman as strong and dedicated to take a part in a movement while the man, Solo, is found to be not up to it.

At the beginning of the novel Solo is seen struggling to survive the poverty and injustice that engulfed him. Throughout the novel he is seen engaged in his own affairs. He goes about his business unwilling to engage in the revolution but constantly thinking of Silvia and the revolution. He does not even summon the courage to step up and advice a fellow countryman who is harassed and put in a lot of pressure that cost him his life by a white American lover.

In *The Healers* (Armah, 1978) Armah has portrayed various influential and strong women. In a traditional society of healers and tribal people we find women who are highly regarded and attentively listened to. We find men who go out of their way to tend to the needs of women.

Araba Jesiwa (Armah 1978, 30) has strong influence over her prince son, Appia. Ababio states that the prince worships his mother, a mother that is in turn bewitched by the wifeless healer Damfoo.

Among the highly respected women in the story we find Nana Esi Amanyiwa. Amanyiwa is the grand mother of the murdered prince. She has just taken leave of her sick bed to attend to her only grand son's funeral. Ababio makes a big scene at the event and she loses her patience.

Then Nana Esi Amanyiwa's voice was heard.  
'Let him go with him,' the voice said, 'since that is his wish.'  
Esi Amanyiwa had spoken calmly. She had not raised her voice. But the effect of her words was instant. Where before the room had been filled with the noise of Ababio's loud lamentation, now there was the profoundest silence, a silence like the sound of forests on a starless night. (Armah 1978: 58)

Though Amanyiwa has spoken calmly and softly, the gathered crowd that was making a lot of noise grew quiet. Ababio himself realizing that the tantrum he had put on has not fooled the old lady, he becomes angry and takes leave of the scene. Amanyiwa is described as a wise woman, who sees through Ababio and his deceiving mourning tantrums.

This elderly's voice that is heard above the clamor of the crowd indicates the respect the traditional society gives to the elder woman. Though Ababio is considered as a powerful man and is feared by many, the respect and obedience that the society gives to traditional elders is far greater. The crowd heeds to the order of the old woman and leave the angry Ababio.

The other strong woman leader is the queen mother of the Asante nation. The nation that Densu and the healer went to restore the health of the great warrior, Asamoa Nkwanta. The nation is feared for its warriors, and a queen who is attentively listened to whenever she spoke. "When Efua Kobri, the queen-mother, had sat, the meeting began. First the queen-mother talked of Asamoa Nkwanta's personal sorrow. Then she talked of the sorrow of the Asante nation. She talked subtly, with infinite grace, and she made her message clear..." (Armah 1978: 239)

The author has described the queen-mother as a wise woman, who knows what to say and when to say it. Nkwanta who has been grieving for his nephew is addressed to console him. She understands that for the nation to survive the immediate danger it faced from the colonizers, the involvement of the great warrior Nkwanta is found crucial. Thus, she gracefully requests him to lead the army, which he accepts.

On this occasion with the presence of kings and elders she was highly regarded. Everyone in the audience member was silently awaiting her arrival. As she takes her designated place the crowd patiently awaits her wise words.

In *Why Are We So Blest?*, Mhendi, the leader of Pluralian, and his friend, while enquiring about the revolution, a native replies:

There was laughter, good-natured, free, from the manager. 'It's a kitchen, what do you want?'

'But you've had a revolution,' Aimee said.

'Yes, we have had a revolution. Our women helped us a lot. They continue to help, as you see. Revolutions are not for turning women into men.'

'I guess so,' I said... (Armah 1974: 243)

The women, as we can observe from these texts, have taken a major role in equally participating in the movement and in some cases even more than men. The involvement has not made them change their nature. If we look at Selina in *A Wreath for Udomo* she has remained true to the traditional ways and in Armah's *Why Are We So Blest?* the women have not changed themselves though they have participated in the revolution. The involvement of women in revolution does not entail for women to change their nature.

The passage quoted above indicates that the revolution is not to change women into men, it might have led the women to partially abandon the domestic responsibilities to participate publicly, but that doesn't change them into men. The assistance they provided and are still providing is acknowledged but that does not mean that men and women should abandon their tradition and custom for them to stand together on desperate occasions.

When we look at Dee (Abrahams, 1965), she acted for her doctor brother when he was in hiding from the colonizers for his involvement in the underground struggle. Dee, who has attended to her brother's patients, shows her indirect involvement despite her physical disability. She stood up for the struggle in concealing vital information from the colonizers.

Dee has contributed her part in hiding the people of underground struggle, of which the headquarter was at her house. Even as she was put under stressful conditions she stood firm by the side of her brother and her fellow revolutionaries. Throughout the story she provides advice and support to the movement.

As men have responsibilities and obligations so do women, women have helped men in times of despair. They have fully participated in the freedom movements. They have achieved this without putting aside their domestic responsibilities, without eliminating their basic difference, with men.

As the Nigerian president has indicated on an occasion, development or any form of activity is impossible to achieve without participating the women, it is imperative that a woman participate in the struggle for development whether the men accept it or not. The women might get involved in revolutionary or any form of struggle directly or indirectly.

It is clearly described in the texts, the vital contribution of women to the movements. The women in the texts have made a great contribution that makes us wonder what the outcome would be without their involvement. The imperative guidance they have provided has earned them respect from their male counterparts.

### **3.3 Sole Companion**

Religious books dictate that a woman is created for a man's company. God created Adam and when he saw that he was alone, he created Eve to keep him company. A woman is believed to be a constant company to man, to comfort him during his lonely times to provide him assistance when in despair and for many more reasons.

Agonito (1979, 97), has describes the comfort and companionship that a woman's presence offers to a man. He further indicates that a woman brings trouble with her; he states that this trouble would put man into downfall, may be because a man is more pure than a woman. This chauvinistic idea, that a woman brings trouble with her is the one view that I don't agree with.

I have come to realize, through experience and reading that a man in desperate need of a woman's companion would do anything. It might be this urge of a man that Agonito so readily blames on a woman. I strongly believe that if a man gets into trouble then it is the man to blame and not necessarily the woman.

The concept that I would like to discuss in this section is of a woman's companionship to man. I would bring out various extracts from the texts to illustrate the discussion.

In the selected texts the women besides playing a major role in the revolutionary movement, they are seen as companions. They are there when a man needs to confide his problems; they give comfort when a man is feeling lonely and give advice when a man is in uncertain of what to do.

### **3.3.1 Consolation**

*The Healers* (Armah, 1978), which is a story of the traditional Africa, provides a vision as to what the society's beliefs and customs used to be. At the beginning of the story Damfoo, the Healer, is belittled because he has no wife. This shows us that a wife is considered as a person that a man can not live without. It shows us the respect that a man receives from having a wife.

Later in the story we find a king's spokesperson getting relief and a will to live due to a woman's presence.

'Your wife cooks well,' said Densu after the meal. 'The fufu was soft, and the soup-I bit my tongue twice.'  
'Yes, Bosoma cooks well, but she's not my wife. She's a relative of the wife I lost. Fifteen years it's been. I did not think I would live. But fifteen years is a long time...' (Armah 1978: 217)

The spokesman of Asanti nation, Nsaako, who has lost his wife fifteen years earlier, tells Densu the difficult time he passed before Bosoma came into his life. The man's grief for his wife, a constant companion, led him as he says to a point where he could not go on living. He was so lost until the relative of his wife came to him.

As I read this, I was reminded of the Oromo culture in our country where a relative marries the widower. This custom might be due to our forefather's realization that a man needs a constant companion. Without a wife figure in a man's life, the missing link is too immense for a man to bear.

At the beginning of the dialogue Densu comments on the succulence of the meal. There is a saying 'The way to a man's heart is through his stomach', it is a wise woman that keeps her man satisfied, may be the

delicious meal that she prepares in addition to her company lifted the spokesman's spirit. As time passes the grief for his wife passes too.

The other character in the texts that I have read who lost his wife and received comfort from another woman is Mhendi, in *A Wreath for Udomo*. He has lost his wife through a struggle in Pluralia. He is seen as a lonely person until Selina makes an arrangement for him to meet Maria.

'I want to thank you for all you have done, for being with me when I needed you on this journey, for ending my loneliness.'

'There is no need for a man to thank his woman. What she does because she must and it fills her heart.'

'But still I want you to know.'

'I know of your thankfulness without words, Mhendi.' (Abrahams, 218)

In the story, the moment he meets Maria he knew he would marry her, which indicates the wise selection of Selina. Maria has also lost her husband due to violence and she strongly resembles to Mhendi's departed wife. Like Mhendi, Maria too finds herself attracted to this man and they go on a journey to his hideout place.

From the conversation, we can observe that Maria has ended his loneliness and that he is thankful. Mhendi is also observed in other parts of the story saying how lonely he was and how grateful he is that Selina has provided him with a new companion, a companion that would relieve him of the loneliness that he was in for so long.

Despite the fact that, Maria and Mhendi develop deep affection for each other and grow closer to each other we observe that she addresses him respectfully. They confide in each other and talk about issues like making love and female genital mutilation. We can observe the respect they have for each other and their exchange of ideas and views as equals.

On page (196), after making love for the first time he tells her how skilled she is, and she replies that she has attended a girls' school where they are given orientation about these things. As he tells her that the women in his country also go to girls' school but they do not possess such skills, she replies by saying may be women are cut and that mutilation kills their feeling. I found this to be a modern way of thinking for a traditional society to discuss. But then maybe traditional societies are not as ignorant as we, in the civilized world think of them.

African youth have fled their countries in search of further education or the betterment of themselves and their nation. These young people are mostly faced with loneliness that is hard to bear. We can find such young people both in Armah's and Abrahams' novels desperate for a woman's company.

At the beginning of *A Wreath for Udomo* (Abrahams, 1956), we find African students arranging parties and inviting friends to meet women. As the chance of finding an African woman is almost rare under the circumstances they seek companionship of European women.

We find Udomo with Lois, Lanwood with Mary Feld and Mabi with various women.

Tom Lanwood's thoughts about his life partner for twenty years Mary Feld is stated as follows:

There'd been that other woman before Mary. Soft and gentle and kind. What was her name now? Good woman, that. What was her name?...Memory began rushing back. He shut the door firmly on it. There is no time for sentimentality. A man must do what he must. And to do it he must keep alive. And to keep alive he must have food and a home and leisure. That was most important and she

had supplied that...But I did try to get away once...That was an attempt to retreat. A defeatist attempt. Glad it failed...(Abrahams 1956: 46)

Lanwood's observation gives us an insight into what a man needs in a woman. His partner in life, Mary is seen being harsh on him and telling him how he and his friends should behave. She is not presented as an ideal woman and yet Lanwood is content to live with her, even if his friends do not understand why he does.

A man needs, as Lanwood justifies himself, a consistency in life that a woman brings, like food on the table when he wants to eat; a warm home to retreat to and of course the leisure of making love every now and then to satisfy his natural desire. These necessities of life as he has presented them, makes him glad of his life and disregard Mary Feld's constant criticism.

The other student that we find lonely is Modin in *Why are We So Blest?*. At the beginning of his educational stay in America, he feels lonely most of the time. Though he spends time with men, his loneliness is a regular torture. "The lonely feeling should have left me, but it hasn't. There is some fear mixed with it. It was strongest when I was talking to Mr. Oppenhardt. I thought it would disappear after I left the estate, but it is still with me. I must see Naita."(Armah 1972: 121)

The Americans, finding him as a potential candidate to facilitate their colonization in Africa, provide him with a special treatment. Mr. Oppenhardt, his benefactor, invites him to his residence to talk politics and other related issues to ascertain his outlook. He is described as a fairly well companion.

Naita, Oppenhardt's African secretary, is observed to be on his mind throughout the story though their encounter was brief. In the short time that they have passed together she has comforted and advised him on the ways of the whites.

At the beginning of his stay in America when he seeks the company of Naita, we may consider that she is the only one he knows there. But as the story develops, we find Naita leaving him to join the movement and his loneliness and confusion growing deeper even as he meets Aimee, an American that aspires to join the African revolution.

Aimee who becomes a constant presence in his life does not relieve him of the loneliness and deep confusion that he is in; in fact she seems to be enhancing his anguish. Though Modin is seen in a desperate state, that strongly affects the reader, he doesn't seem to want to separate himself from her.

Throughout the story, based on Modin's diary, he is observed writing his feeling to the one time companion, and the reliever of his loneliness, Naita.

In Peter Abraham's *A Night of Their Own* (Abrahams, 1965) we observe a white man seeking conciliation with an African woman. Karl Van As, a high ranking official of the colonizers, sneaks to the African vicinity to meet with Mildred Scott. After a stressful day at work he calls upon Mildred to comfort him.

As the resistance from the underground fighters becomes stronger his distress increases and thus the need for Mildred's company increases with it.

He picked up the telephone again and dialed Mildred Scott's number. She answered almost immediately and her voice was like a fresh cool breeze touching the temples on a stifling hot day...He waited for her to hang up and the heaviness of the world, now, was a little more supportable (Abrahams 1965: 231).

When I observe Van As's despair and as I feel his relief in hearing the comforting voice of Mildred, I was reminded of Agonito's (1977) quote of Friedrich Nietzsche who stated 'Man should be brought up for the purpose of war and woman for the relaxation of the soldier: everything else is foolish.' A woman's potential in comforting and relaxing a man in a struggle, as he indicates, is as important as her involvement in a struggle.

A woman is indeed a soothing retreat for the agitated soul of a man. A woman's mere presence presents a man with a sense of fulfillment and a sense of being one with himself. The hardship of life would be more bearable with a woman by a man's side.

These I presume, are fine examples of a woman's role as reliever of a man's loneliness. A woman considered by many as a household companion, is portrayed by these African writers as an asset who plays a significant role in a man's life besides rearing children. A woman's role as can be observed from the extracts is so crucial that we may speculate what a man would do without a woman by his side to console him.

### **3.3.2 Advisors**

Most people perceive that in a traditional society a woman is looked down upon. These women are believed to obey orders and not to forward their opinions or comments. In the texts that I have reviewed, the women are portrayed as performing the opposite.

Hobbes indicates (as cited in Agonito 1979: 95-96) physical strength is subjective, something that depends on the personality and lifestyle. When it comes to cunning and wit the women are found to be superior to men.

In the analyzed texts women are consulted for advice and in some cases the women venture their opinions. Mostly these suggestions forwarded have come out to be unsurpassable. The women characters can be observed freely expressing their comments and the men are generally observed following their advice.

In *Why are We So Blest?* (Armah: 1978), Naita provides Modin with vital information about Americans and their mischievous friendship.

'You have no business trusting them. Listen, if you can use them, good luck to you, but don't get involved. There's nothing like friendship possible between us and them. You get involved with them, you're dumb, that's all. They'll mess you up.' (Armah 1972: 123)

Modin, who is a new arrival at the time, perceives that she has misunderstood the Americans. At the time his education was paid by a nice looking gentleman, they were inviting him to their homes and some wives to their beds, he regards them as good people.

When Naita harshly talks about their ways it was hard for him to grasp. He disregarded her advice and revolved around the company of American men and women. In the end, he suffers the consequences. He brings the American he is keeping company with to his home country to participate in the revolution. He is brutally killed for getting involved with a white girl.

In the underground struggle of South Africans, Dee Nunkhoo, the sister of the doctor orchestrating the struggle, is seen playing an important role

in the movement. While Richard Nkosi's hide-out is about to be discovered, the others don't know what to do she provides her suggestion.

'You talk to him, Dee...They're looking for you everywhere, man! Don't you understand. Tell him, Dee!'

'It's no good Dawood. But listen, I can take him to the farm...'

The sense of helplessness fell away from Nunkhoo. He said: 'I think Dee's got something. You can lie low on the farm till word comes through. The only problem is to get you there.'

'I'll take him,' Dee said quickly (Abrahams 1965: 95).

Dee's suggestion gives Dawood relief. He does not feel infuriated that she has come up with the logical suggestion. Instead, he is observed appreciating the suggestion. She even shows her bravery and courage by volunteering to take a 'wanted man' across town to the hide-out place.

In *The Healers*, on their journey to the other healers' village, Damfoo, Densu, Ajoa and Araba were in a state of urgency. They could not stop the canoeing to rest, thus; Ajoa comes up with an idea. "Night came. Ajoa suggested they take turns sleeping, one rowing another steering while the third lay besides Araba Jesiwa. (Armah 1978: 150) This extract indicates that even a highly regarded healer, Damfoo, did not undermine a girl's suggestion. Damfoo and Densu accept the suggestion as reasonable and comply with it.

In *A Wreath for Udomo*, on the journey to the mountain, Lois (Abrahams, 1956) is constantly giving advice on what to do and when to do it. And we can also observe the men's obedience without questioning.

Selina, who becomes the real power behind the organization and whose unending support to the party and the movement proves crucial has

forwarded her advice on several occasions. The men constantly seek her input on matters regarding the party.

'But how'll we get rid of the old man?' the first said.  
'You know Selina at the market?'  
'Everybody knows Selina. She's a big trading woman. Rich, too'  
(Abrahams 1956: 157)

Selina, who is involved in every affair of the party from the beginning, is constantly asked for advice. She is seen as an influential woman who has her ways of making things happen. During a publication of the propaganda when Udomo and his comrades did not know what to do the only one they could think of to solve this problem for them was Selina. On every occasion that Selina is called for, she has performed what is expected of her and more.

This incident is not the only one that we see when Selina's advice is appreciated. When Udomo becomes prime minister of the nation he needs her advice. "Udomo said: 'Get to my office as soon as you can. Jones will be there. I'll need all the help I can get with those hardheaded businessmen.' He grinned suddenly. 'Wish I could call in Selina..'"  
(Abrahams: 203)

At the time, he was making deals with white business men and he is trying to fight tribalism, which he indicates is one of the problems of the nation. Besides this, at the time, the colonizers were closely inspecting Selina for fear that she might lead another riot.

If he called Selina for assistance, he knows that he would get the assistance he needed badly but the whites would consider him as a traitor since she has fought so candidly against the whites and their

mischievous ways. Thus, he sits back regretting the situation that he is in, having to lead without Selina's support and advice.

### **3.4 Care for Their Women**

In these texts women are given great care and attention. We have seen Damfoo (Armah, 1978,) giving up his wife because she was not happy with him, we have seen Solo(Armah, 1972) letting go of his wife to join the party, and we can also observe the extra care and treatment Damfoo has given to Araba while she is mentally and physically ill.

Women characters in the text are given due care and attention by their men. The men tried to satisfy the women in the act of natural bliss. I was under the impression that traditional men only care about their own feelings but that was not the reality in these texts.

Damfoo, who is considered as the strongest healer had a wife and daughter. They lived in the forest with other healers. His wife Ama becomes dissatisfied with the forest life and longs to return to the wider world of Esuano. Look at this passage:

Damfoo understood his wife. He did not block her desire to return to Esuano. What at the time he had only considered likely he found out a little later to have been the naked truth: Ama did not leave the eastern forest alone. Returning to Esuano with her was a companion called Esuman. (Armah 1978, 62)

The wifeless Damfoo, as Ababio has described him, became wifeless because he did not choose to force his wife to stay with him. He could have forced her or at least he could have taken his daughter, whom his wife took with her, but he did not want to see her unhappiness. He had suspected that her unhappiness came not only from the forest life, and

yet he abides by her wish. The action taken by the traditional healer Damfoo makes him a true gentleman in our generation. His wife who had loved and respected him before, but with this incident she finds herself admiring and respecting him even more. Later in the story the daughter seeks out her father, of her own free will, and lives with him at the eastern forest.

In Abrahams' *A Night of their Own* the crippled Dee, the doctor's sister is greatly cared for. There is concern that the fugitive Nkosi might harm her in some way.

'But what? You've seen and heard the man. Do you think he'll try and murder Miss Dee in the middle of the night?'

'No, Sammy...But...'

'You think he'll rape her?'

Dicky Naicker looked appealingly at Sammy Naidoo. He knew that Sammy knew what was in his mind,...He thought: Please, Sammy, you know what I mean. He's black and she is one of ours. She's the doc's sister and we must take care of her (Abrahams 1965: 67).

Dee, the doctor's sister, is a physically impaired strong woman. When the fugitive Nkosi is sheltered in her house, the concern for her welfare is raised by friends and relatives. They were worried that the fugitive, who is from their tribe, might cause some harm to her, and thus they vow to protect her.

And when Nkosi and the doctor were forced to leave the country, all they could think about is, the beloved Dee that they are leaving behind." 'Please take care of her, Joe,' Nunkhoo said and put his arm about Nkosi's shoulders. 'For both of us.' Joe held out his hand to Nkosi." (Abrahams 1965: 264)

These two dialogues and many more in the text demonstrate in clear terms that in the disturbed nation of South Africa, the men have made efforts to protect the women of the society so they will not face unnecessary harm. They are seen protecting their women to the best of their ability.

We also see in Abraham's novel, Mhandi taking care of his wife Maria. Mhendi, who has already lost a wife through the struggle, does not want to expose the new found treasure in his life to unnecessary danger.

'...The jungle is no place for a woman.'

'No, my lord. This is the place where I will wait. I will obey you in everything but this. Please do not talk of it any more. It is something special to me.'

They were both naked now. Suddenly, as though for the first time, he saw the dark glory of her naked beauty.

'Maria...'

He pulled her into his arms, felt the trembling of her strong young body. Desire welled up in him.

'Later,' she murmured. 'Just a little while now...' She pulled away, wrapped herself in a dry cloth, then helped him tie his toga fashion (Abrahams 1956: 264-265).

Mhandi fears that the forest might pose a danger to Maria. He expresses his fear but she would have none of it. She says that her place is beside him and indicates that wherever he goes she would follow. Later in the story we see Mhandi trying to protect her from the colonial army that came to execute him.

From the passage above we can also observe that the woman has the power to put the man's strong desire on hold. She has a say as to when it is the appropriate time to do it and when not, not by force but by wit and affection. She has wisely calmed down his strong natural desire.

This observation leads us to the idea that a woman can influence a man's action. In the harsh world that we live in women are exposed to rape and violence, it might be the wit of the woman that may get her out of such dangerous situations.

### **3.5 A Temptress**

Women have been named a lot of things, one of them being the temptress. Religious leaders have forbidden women to publicly show their body parts, their hair and even in some fundamental Muslim cases they have to wear a veil that hides their eyes.

All this laws enforced on women to hide themselves is due to the overpowering erotic power they have on men. As psychologist David M. Buss (Kelly, 1998) has indicated, women who possess the qualities men prefer are most able to translate their preferences into actual companionship decisions. Thus women can ultimately change men's judgmental ability in favor of themselves.

The concern of religious leaders is that this influence that women possess can overpower a man and make him subservient to women rather than being the other way around. Their fear is that the male-oriented society would not become operational if women are allowed to exercise their power over man.

Armah (*The Healers*, 1978) has portrayed this tempting power that women have in Ajoa. She sneaks upon Densu as he was swimming in the river. Though in a traditional society, she is seen tempting Densu into desiring her." 'You are a good hunter,' Ajoa said. 'You are a good temptress, leaving me naked,' Densu said." (Armah 1978: 230).

The fact that she left him naked as he got out of the river, turned his mind into a sexual desire once he found out that it was Ajoa, who hid his cloth. It is almost as if the men are ever ready to be tempted into having sex. He is naked, and a smiling Ajoa around arouses his desire and later they are seen making love.

As quoted by Bristow (Agonito 1979: 91-92) "... Weininger hurtles towards the drastic conclusion that men are constantly in danger from the devouring passions of all women..." it might be this everready desire to have sex that led Weininger into stating the constant danger that men are in.

It seems that when a man is in pursuit of satisfying his desire all judgmental functions are blocked from his mind. Men as psychologists have indicated have to satisfy that hunger and then think of the consequences afterwards. This instinctive behavior is illustrated in both Armah's and Abrahams' novels, where the men regret their actions later.

... Her dressing-gown fell open, revealing one thigh...Udomo raised his eyes from the papers and looked at her, at the long slender naked thigh.

'You ought to get dressed.'

She roared with laughter.

'Oh, Mike! Don't pretend to be prissy with me.'

'I have work to do.'

'And I distract you?' she sounded happy.

'Yes,' he said coldly...He turned back to his work. But his concentration, now, had grown weaker.

'Michael. That's what Lois calls you, Michael. And she makes it sound as though she's singing a song. Michael.'

He raised his eyes and tried to keep them away from her thigh, but they would stay there.(Abrahams 1956: 99)

Michael Udomo, who finds Jo, his lover's roommate, tries to refrain his feeling but to no avail. He tries to concentrate on his work and she makes the temptation even greater when she calls his name the way his lover does.

At the end she is seen leaving the room, as though she knows that he can not resist coming to her. True enough he goes to her and satisfy himself and making her pregnant during the event. Udomo's instinctive action has led to the breaking up with his lover, which he is seen regretting until the end of his life.

In Armah's *Why Are We So Blest?* Modin, who has been warned of the white people's mischievous ways, can not resist the wife of his mentor and he is seen paying dearly for it.

Mrs. Jefferson wore a sent she knew I liked the night Professor Jefferson stabbed me....Mrs Jefferson's husband was supposed to have gone to some conference the night of the party, but when I arrived she told me he was upstairs in bed, too depressed to do anything but sleep. I didn't ask what had depressed him. (Armah 1974: 154)

In spite of the warning his friend Neita has given him and his own better judgment, he gets involved with the wife of his benefactor. On an occasion, he goes out to the garden and makes love to the wife while her husband and his mentor Professor Jefferson was in the house. He is later stabbed badly by the professor and he is seen regretting his actions.

As the extract of his thoughts mentioned above indicates, the perfume that she has worn has made him hungry for her. He presumes she has applied the perfume that he liked to seduce him. From this we can gather that there are a lot of ways for a woman to seduce a man.

In this passage we can observe the power that women have over men. The women are seen giving genuine advice and the men facing the consequences by disregarding the advice. We observe women influencing men to carry out their wishes against their better judgment. Women in these texts have been given the power over men.

I have tried to show some of the strapping features that the writers have portrayed. The writers, it seems are justifying the traditional norms of Africans. They have addressed man and woman relationship, the marriage arrangements and how they work out, the acknowledged fault in genital mutilation and most of all the strong women and their contribution to a movement besides their fellow men.

These writers have shown that the African society gives respect and regard a woman's opinion highly. As I have tried to illustrate above the discriminations that feminists criticize are not present in these texts.

The writers seem to be traditionalists for I have found both writers justifying the tribal ways and traditional practices. In the texts the traditional ways are preferred by the native societies rather than foreign customs.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **CONCLUSION**

The feminist movement has had many forms and shapes during its evolution. Many views and theories have been constructed. Activists of the movement have shown their views by criticizing the others. By reviewing some of these theories I have come to an understanding that most of them base themselves on a particular society and generalize their findings to apply to other societies.

Mary Maynard (Jackson, 1998) has indicated that feminist theories are based on a particular society's standard and a certain ethnic group. The theories, she found, do not necessarily address the needs of women, rather they are designed to serve as a political or other related agenda of a particular society.

Many African scholars have voiced their concern over the promotion of these views in Africa. They state that these feminist propagandas do not apply to African countries. Taban Liyong (King, 1996) is one among such Africans who state that these systems are designed to alienate the women of Africa from the men.

I agree with their concern since I also have perceived that gender activist feminists assume that gender study and feminist movements are about antagonizing men. Women and men in African societies perceive that the feminist movements designed by western activists are applicable to every society and that they are the solutions to the 'oppressed' women of Africa.

The difference in culture and ethnicity has a great bearing in the gender establishment of a society. African women and European women or African and American women are treated differently. Even in African nations according to the norm and culture the women's place in a society varies. In my analysis of the two African writers to identify the portrayal of women in African society, I have found that the theories that feminists have come up with do not apply to the societies they have portrayed.

In the four novels I have reviewed, the involvement of women is not in accordance with the developed feminist theories. There might be some relation to the theme of the movement of oppression. It was found that the oppressions that the Europeans label are not necessarily considered as such by the traditional society of Africa.

It was also found that the women portrayed in the texts have strong personalities. The women are seen leading a movement and receiving respect for it. The women's opinions are valued. The writers of these novels have even gone as far as indicating women's strong influence over men. The women in these novels as portrayed by the writers correlate with real African women, who have shown their strength throughout history.

Thus in conclusion it may be stated that the women of each society are valued and placed in a society in various ways. The application of the feminist theory of other societies in African society is doing more damage than good. The study has proved that, if gender activists would like to advocate their doctrine they have to do it in accordance with the culture and norm of the society. Localizing and regionalizing of gender issues should be the end result.

Based on my study, I propose that further studies should be made regarding the portrayal of women in literature. A sociological survey made to closely inspect the various traditions and customs of a society would help design an appropriate gender study.

It is clear that the misconception of gender study and feminist movements would be revoked if further efforts are made to clarify the doctrine and the misconceptions around it. Presenting the doctrine in such a way that a society would best comprehend and in a way that would be applicable to a society without alienating the culture and taking the perception of the society into consideration would, I believe, have the desired result of avoiding inhumane treatment of women.

It is my belief that designing of gender studies at a grass root level and localizing it in tune with a particular society would be beneficial to all parties concerned. In a developing country like ours, the feminist theories and gender issues have no significance, if they can not be applied at the grass root level. They should be constructed in such a way that men and women of a society can work in harmony for development rather than antagonizing each other.

This study would be of at most importance to organizations working on gender and women's issues. The Ministry of Women's Affairs, Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association and Progynist Ethiopia among others would benefit from the findings.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abrams, M.H. **A Glossary of Literary Terms**. USA: Heinle & Heinle, 1999.
- Abrahams, Peter. **A Night of Their Own**. London: Faber and Faber, 1965.
- Abrahams, Peter. **A Wreath for Udomo**. London: Faber and Faber, 1956.
- Agonito, R. **History of Ideas on Women. A Source Book**. New York: Paragon Books Printing, 1979.
- Armah, A.K. **The Healers**. London: Heinemann Education Books Inc., 1979.
- Armah, A.K. **Why Are We So Blest?** London: Heinemann Education Books Inc., 1974.
- Benedek W. et al ed. **Human Rights of Women. International Instruments and African Experiences**. UK: Biddles Ltd, 2002.
- Bristow J. **Sexuality**. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Chukukere, C. Gloria. **Gender Voices and Choices: Rendering Women in Contemporary African Fiction**. Nigeria: Novelty industrial Enterprise Ltd., 1995.
- Farber, M. Seymour et al ed. **The Potential of Woman**. USA: McGraw-Hill Book Company Inc., 1963.
- Jackson, S. et al ed. **Contemporary Feminist Theories**. Finland: Edinburgh University Press, 1998.
- James, U. V. et al. ed. **The Feminization of Development Processes in Africa. Current and Future Perspectives**. USA: Praeger Publishers, 1999.
- Kelly, F. Gary ed. **Sources. Notable Selections in Human Sexuality**. Guilford, Connecticut: Dushkin/ McGraw Hill, 1998.
- King, B. **New National and Post-Colonial Literatures. An Introduction**. New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1996.
- Mills, Sara. **Feminist Stylistics**. New York: Routledge, 1995.

- Shattack, J. **Women and Literature in Britain 1800-1900**. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Wall, E. ed. **Sexual Harassment, Confrontations and Decisions**. Canada: Prometheus Books, 1992.
- Walsh, R. M. ed. **The Psychology of Women. On Going Debates**. USA, New York: Vail-Ballogh Press, Inc., 1987.
- Wilson, H. L. R. ed. **The Potential of Women**. San Francisco: McGraw Hill, 1963.
- Denekew Assaye. **Socio-Literary Study of Five African Countries**. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University, 1982.
- Mulumebet Zenebe. **A comparative Analysis of the Images of Men and Women in the Works of Some Ethiopian Writers**. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University, 1996.
- Tewedaj Kebede. **Ayi Kwei Armah's claim of African Lives Destruction: with Reference to Two Thousand seasons**. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University, 1998.