AFRICAN FEMINISM IN SELECTED CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN NOVELS IN ENGLISH: A COMPARATIVE APPROACH

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JUNE 2020

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Literature

College of Humanities, Language Studies, Journalism and Communication
Addis Ababa University

June 2020

Addis Ababa University

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Declaration

I declare that the research entitled "**African Feminism in Selected Contemporary African Novels in English: A Comparative Approach"** is my own work and all the references that I have used or quoted have been duly acknowledged.

Name: Mesfin Wodajo Woldemariam Signature: _____ Date: 08/06/2020

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Abstract

The main aim of this research is to examine representation of women's issues in contemporary African Anglophone novels (published from 2000-2016) because such novels are not studied comparatively and comprehensively from African feminist perspectives. To this end, eight novels such as: *Kintu* (2014), *Hiding in Plain Sight* (2014), *Ancestor Stones* (2006), *Season of Crimson Blossoms* (2016), *Coconut* (2008), *The Hairdresser of Harare* (2010), *Minaret* (2005) and *The Yacoubian Building* (2004) are selected and analyzed based on African feminist theoretical framework. The result of the analyses shows that all the studied novels attempt to correct the misrepresentation of identities, experiences and burdens of African women by colonialism, neo-colonialism and Western feminism and call for inclusion of women's experiences and roles in post-colonial discourses. Particularly, two female-authored novels, *Kintu* and *Ancestor Stones*, go back to delineate the pre-colonial cultural history of their respective nation in comparison with the post-colonial contexts of their respective societies' view of women's roles and experiences; whereas the rest focus on contemporary issues of women in their particular societies or nations. Most of the examined novels reinforce African feminists' argument, which states that African women's movement for liberation should be based on African indigenous knowledge and culture, and through which they disclose and challenge various roots of women's suppression. All the novels share themes such as recognizing and transforming the notion of motherhood; decolonizing African women's culture and identity (except *Minaret*); maintaining a cooperative relationship between men and women through negotiation and compromise with the assumption of binary complementarity of male and female rather than binary oppositions. Although there are few weak and submissive women characters that agree with both patriarchal and colonial/neo-colonial oppression, many of the women characters in each of the above-studied novels are depicted as strong and progressive. These female characters endeavor to bring socio-cultural transformation by confronting poverty, post-colonial mal-governance systems and related amoralities with recognition of the significance of proper education for empowerment of women and their respective societies.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved late mother, Abebech Burayu, whom I lost in 2013. My late mother, my forever model, was full of wisdom and strength that has shaped my overall life. My mother did not get modern education, but she was clearly aware of the importance of education and paid greatest sacrifice (which I cannot afford to payback) to sustain my academic ladders. Let the Almighty God rest her soul in peace.

Acknowledgments

I would like to praise the Almighty God for giving me strength and dedication to complete this dissertation. My deepest gratitude also goes to my resourceful supervisor, Dr. Berhanu Matthews (Associate Professor) who has devotedly provided much time and knowledge in shaping this dissertation. Had it not been for his critical comments and fatherly advice, this dissertation would have not taken the current status and shape. His polite, respectful and kind words and approach also taught me much so that I will offer the same respect and guidance to my students.

My father, Wodajo Woldemariam has also made great contributions to my academic success since the very beginning unto this PhD level. His kind words and all-time prayers in addition to material support have been giving me strength to challenge all problems that I have been meeting in my academic journey. Again, my eldest brother, Bekele Mengesha with his wife Ejigayehu Admasu has been helpful while I have been climbing different academic ladders.

My beloved wife, Roman Suleiman, my sweet little son, Enon Mesfin and lovely little daughter, Deborah Mesfin also deserve warmest thanks for their unconditional love and help during my struggle in writing this dissertation. Especially, my wife alone discharged all the responsibilities that require commitment to be rendered by both of us while I was fully engaged in this research work. Furthermore, my mother in-law, Alemitu Alemu and brother in-law Bereket Legesse have been supportive in many ways during the process of writing this dissertation.

What is more, I would like to thank my close friend and staff, Ablel Berhane and his wife Muluwork Kebede for their motivation and support in the course of undertaking this research. My cousin, Fitsum Emiru, also deserves my heartfelt thanks for his prayers and encouragements when I was writing this research. Finally, my appreciations go to my friends: Dr. Desta Firdu, Bewketu Haile, Mekuanint Tilahun, Tegegn Fantahun and Mesfin Geremew for their relentless encouragements and material supports.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AAU: Addis Ababa University

FAO: Food and Agricultural Organization

IMF: International Monetary Fund

NEPAD: New Partnership for African Development

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

STIWA: Social Transformation Including Women in Africa

Trans.: Translated

UN: United Nations

USA: United States of America

Note: All references in this study are based on Gregorian calendar.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The concept of modern African literature has been debatable among Eurocentric and Afrocentric critics. Eurocentric critics argue that modern African literature is a continuation of European realism. However, according to Afrocentric thinkers, African literature is not an imitation of Western European authors; rather it is rooted in African cultural traditions. Therefore, African writers did not hear about literature from the mouth of Europeans. Africans knew the concept of literature before the arrival of Europeans although Western education has contributed to the development of modern African novels (Melakneh, 2012). Then, modern African novel in European languages particularly, in English is born out of the interface between indigenous forms of oral literature and the novel that is characterized by the European narrative style. This is because even though many genres of literature such as epic poetry, drama and other prose narrative forms have been indigenous to African traditions in the form of oral literature before the emergency of modern literacy in Africa, the novel had been new to the continent (Abiye, 1998; Brar & Singh, 2011).

However, the African novel in English or in other languages "has a special identity and place in world literature, which is also a historical record of the African society having its own unique identity and ethno-cultural sufficiency" (Brar & Singh, 2011, p. 473). Since African people are very rich in their oral literatures and various genres of oral literatures have been influencing modern African novel in English, it is distinctively seen from European and American novels as well from other Anglophone novels written around the globe. African novelists who write in English such as Fagunwa, Camara Laye, Amos Tutuola, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Chinua Achebe, Elechi Amadi, Grace Ogot, Flora Nwapa, Ama Ata Aidoo, and Bessie Head among others include African orature in their novels. These writers have employed African myths, legends, folktales, fables, proverbs and idioms in creating African novels (Brar &Singh, 2011; Melakneh, 2012; Sadia, 2016). Thereby, even though African novelists write in English, their novels are different from that of Anglophone novels written by Europeans or Americans with regard to both content and style. Using English as their medium, African novelists address their respective nation's

cultural and social values to global readers in ways that correct the distorted history of African people by colonialism.

According to Melakneh (2012), Anglophone African novels can be categorized into four broad phases. The first phase covers novels written until early 1950s. Writers in this phase have emphasized on historical and national themes while condemning colonial discourses that misrepresented African people and their cultural traditions (Yunusy, 2015). Hence, they have refuted the colonialists' wrong assumption that African people did not have history and culture before the arrival of Western colonizers (Melakneh, 2012). Novels such as Joseph Casley Hyford's *Ethiopia Unbound* (1911), Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* (1925), Daniel Fagunwa's *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons* (1946), Peter Abrahams's *Song of the City* (1945) and *Mine Boy* (1946), Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1952), and Camara Laye's *The Dark Child* (1954) are notable works of the first phase. These novelists have condemned the colonial wrong depiction of African people and culture while amending the distorted history and sociology of Africa in ways that glorify the pre-colonial social, political and cultural traditions of Africa *(*Anthony & Kolawole, 2014; Killam & Kerfoot, 2008).

The second phase covers novels written from late 1950s to early 1960s. This generation of writers focused on anti-colonial issues. Novelists such as Camera Laye in *The African Child* (1955), Mongo Beti in *Mission to Kala* (1954), Ferdinald Oyono in *House boy* (1956), Chinua Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *Arrow of God* (1964), Ousmane Sembene in *God's Bits of Wood* (1960), and Ngugi Wa Thiongo in *Weep Not Child* (1964) have discussed themes of colonial injustice and struggled for freedom. In their novels, they have exposed various repulsive social, cultural, economic, political and psychological effects of colonialism on African people (Anthony & Kolawole, 2014; Jick & Nkweteyim, 2016; Killam & Kerfoot, 2008; Melakneh, 2012).

The third phase of African novels has been characterized by disillusionment of post-independence African scenarios (Melakneh, 2012). To end the ruthless colonial system, African people struggled much and most of them attained their independence in the second half of the 20th century particularly, in the 1960s. Ironically, in post-independence Africa, the new African leaders who took power from colonizers failed to realize the vision of equality, justice, socio-economic and cultural development that the indigenous African people were dreaming during their anti-colonial struggle. Therefore, post-independence years in many colonized nations of Africa are

characterized by indices of under development such as economic dependency, enormous foreign debts, ethno-religious violence, joblessness, poverty, illiteracy, electoral deception, corruption, poor infrastructure and so on (Melakneh, 2012). Ultimately, East and West African novelists such as Wole Soynka in *The Interpreters* (1965), T.M Aluko in *Chief, The Honorable Minster* (1965), Chinua Achebe in *The Man of the People* (1966), Cameron Duado in *The Gab Boys* (1967), Ayi Kwei Armah in *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1970), Kofi Awoonor in *This Earth My Brother* (1971), and Meja Mwangi in *Kill Me Quick* (1973) exposed political disillusionment of independent African nations (Anthony & Kolawole, 2014; Melakneh, 2012; Yunusy, 2015). Briefly, novels under the third phase criticized the colonial legacy along with expressing African people's disillusionment with the failure of post-colonial leaders to meet the people's expectations.

The fourth phase is contemporary African novels. Since 1970s, contemporary West and East African novelists focus on themes of their respective time's political and social problems of African people. In this phase, African novelists go beyond disillusionment and activate the mass to combat against social, political and economic injustices, military dictatorship, pestering of opposition parties, civil wars generated by insensitive politicians and parasitic bourgeoisies (Anthony & Kolawole, 2014; Melakneh, 2012). Novelists such Wole Soyinka in *Season of Anomy* (1973), Ngugi wa Thiongo in *Petals of Blood* (1977) and in *Devil on the Cross* (1982), Chinua Achebe in *Anthills of Savannah* (1987), Nuruddin Farah in his trilogy: *Sweet and Sour Milk* (1979), *Sardines* (1981) and *Close Sesame* (1983), and Moses Isegawa in *Abyssinian Chronicles* (2000) few from many others are prominent in this phase of African novels. These novelists have been exposing and challenging the continuation of colonial legacy through neo-colonialism and its inexorable effect on development of the continent along with deriving African people to stand against the corrupt and inept post-colonial leaders and elite (Anthony & Kolawole, 2014; Melakneh, 2012; Sadia, 2016).

With respect to Southern Africa, nations such as South Africa, Zimbabwe, Angola and Mozambique had been under the colonial system when Eastern and Western countries of the continent gained independence in the 1960s. South Africa, which achieved independence in the 1990s had been under colonial oppression through apartheid. Apartheid that was the policy of enforced separation among black and white people in every sphere of life damaged social,

political, cultural, economic and psychological positions and values of indigenous people of the nation (Melakneh, 2008). As Abiye (1998) shows, Black South African novelists such as Peter Abrahams and Alex-La-Guma who wrote during the colonial period depict their disillusionment with the injustices of apartheid. On the other hand, post-apartheid South African novels celebrate themes such as emergence of new social problems, advocacy of cultural hybridization, essentialism and post-apartheid resistance, homosexuality, economic protection, problems of readjustment, and the spread of HIV AIDS. Some of the most prominent post-apartheid South African novels are *Disgrace* (1999) by Coetzee, *The Heart of Redness* (2000) by Mda, and *Welcome to Our Hill brow* (2001) by Mpe (Anthony & Kolawole, 2014; Melakneh, 2008).

Concerning Zimbabwe, Chigwedere (2015) states that as the country endured almost a century of colonialism (1890-1980), its literature deals with experiences that negatively affected the psyche and culture of the black people. Most authors in colonial Zimbabwe were determined by the desire to derange colonialism and recover authentic African identity. The post-independence Zimbabwe's Anglophone novels such as Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988), Chenjerai Hove's *Bones* (1988), Yvonne Vera's *Without a Name* (1994), *Butterfly Burning* (1998) and *Stone Virgins* (2000) among others have ensured a well-developed Zimbabwean literary landscape within the broader African literary arena. These novels deal with issues of cultural alienation, the breadth and depth of the Zimbabwean experience, historical, cultural, social and psychological dimensions of life in the context of a society that is rapidly changing (Chigwedere, 2015; Melakneh, 2008).

Regarding North African novels, Abiye (1998) observes that major themes of North African novels "are based on a contradiction between religion, philosophy, tradition and modernization, thus giving the literature an Arabic local color" (p. 64). Novels like Naguib Mahfouz's *Dweller in Truth* (1985) attempt to recreate the events that led to the political and religious split of Egypt (Killam & Kerfoot, 2008). Sonallah Ibrahim's *Beirut, Beirut* (1988), *The Committee* (1981), *Dhat* (1992) and *Sharaf* (1997) are also among the prominent novels of post-colonial Egypt. North African novels persistently represent their societies' battle between the secular and the religious, playing on the theme of destiny as their characters either support religion or devalue for their education in Europe (Abiye, 1998).

Similarly, Central African novels are influenced by the North African trend, revolve around themes related to religion. For instance, the Sudanese novelist, Tayeb Salih's *The Wedding of Zein* (1962), *Season of Migration to the North* (1969) and *Meryoud* (1976) deal with the impact of colonialism and modernity on rural Sudanese societies in particular and Arab culture in general (Anthony& Kolawole, 2014). In Salah's novels, cultural clang occurs as Western educated elites attempt to modify their culture although they are finally devastated by tradition (Abiye, 1998).

Concomitantly, issues of women are also prominent themes of contemporary African novels from Eastern, Western, Southern, Central and Northern parts of the continent (Anthony & Kolawole, 2014; Begum, 2016; Melakneh, 2008; Sadia, 2016; Stratton, 1994). Patriarchal ideology has greatly affected women as writers and the representation of women characters in literary works. The colonial Victorian education, which restricted women's role to household activities, also became a burden for African women writers (Sadia, 2016). Men had mainly controlled African novels because they have had more access to the English-based education system than women had had, and they have consequently had more chances to become literary authors (Nnaemeka, 2005; Stratton, 1994). Besides, publishing companies like for instance, the East African Literature Bureau did not welcome literary productions of African women (Sadia, 2016).

To that effect, women were less visible in the modern African literary canons as male writers have dominated the field. African literary critics had also overlooked gender perspective while characterizing African literature and this implies that such critics tend to eliminate women's literary discourses from African literature. Jick and Nkweteyim (2016) illustrate that even though the first generation of female writers (such as Flora Nwapa, Efua Sutherland, Ama Ata Aidoo, Zulu Sofola, Bessie Head and Grace Ogot) started writing in the mid-sixties, they did not get any favorite criticism or evocative consideration from their male counterparts. Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* (1966) was the first published novel written by an African woman while at that time idiosyncratically male-authored fictional works were already recognized in Africa. Surprisingly, a Sierra Leonean male critic, Eustace Palmer in *An Introduction to the African Novel* (1972) marginalized Nwapa's novel (Jick & Nkweteyim, 2016; Sadia, 2016; Stratton, 1994).

Indeed, Palmer in his second book, *The Growth of the African Novel* (1979) again omitted the above-mentioned women novelists. Analogously, Gerald Moore in *Twelve African Writers* (1980) also left out African women writers from the list of African canons. These male critics were using

women discriminatory criteria in setting canons for African literature. Moreover, Bernth Lindfors in *The Famous Authors' Reputation Test: An Update to 1986* (1990) and *The Teaching of African Literatures in Anglophone African Universities: An Instructive Canon* (1990), Chinua Achebe, Ngũgĩ Wa Thiongo and Wole Soyinka occupied the top three positions while the next seven positions were taken by Ayi Kwei Armah, John Pepper Clark, Okot P'Bitek, Christopher Okigbo, Pete Abrahams, Alex La Guma, and Dennis Brutus; whereas, Ama Ata Aidoo and Bessie Head took the fifteenth and eighteenth positions respectively (Sadia, 2016; Stratton, 1994).

Marginalization of African women in African literature was not restricted to African women writers. The male-centered outlook of early African literature presented female characters giving them marginalized roles. Earlier African men writers have maintained the practice of submerging gender category in colonial discourse (Stratton, 1994). Similar with the colonial discourses, in the literatures of former male African writers, the experiences and roles of African women were given less attention, and they are misrepresented. For instance, Jick and Nkweteyim (2016) demonstrate that in novels such as Fagunwa's *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons* (1946), Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-wine Drinkard* (1952), Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), *A Man of the People* (1966) and *Arrow of God* (1964), and Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine* (1966), male characters take central roles while female characters are given peripheral and marginal positions and roles.

Likewise, Melakneh (2008) argues that in Ghanaian Armah's *The Beauytful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1970), in Kenyan Mwangi's *Kill Me Quick* (1973), in South African Cotezee's *Disgrace* (1999), and in Ugandan Moses's *Abyssinian Chronicles* (2000) women characters are depicted as victims of patriarchy and post-independence snags. Moreover, Cherop (2015) shows that Ngugi's *The River Between* (1963) emphasizes more on Kenya's struggle for liberation from colonialism by relegating gender issues. In the novel, although female characters drive narration and help male characters realize their visions, men are depicted as heroes and most of female characters portrayed as passive wives and victims of harmful traditions. Feven (2009) also indicates that the Somali novelist, Farah in *Sweet and Sour Milk* (1979) depicts female characters as economically dependent, politically inactive, incapable to make decisions, acquiescent to patriarchal subjugation and restricted to household duties such as nurturing children and serving husbands.

Nevertheless, some of the above-mentioned male novelists depict women characters positively and progressively in their later novels. Jick and Nkweteyim (2016) state that Amadi in his later novel

Estrangement (1986) shows the progressive and significantly changing role and positions of women. Likewise, Melakneh (2008) exhibits that in *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987), Achebe has revolutionized the image of women; thus, female characters play prominent roles, and some women characters are educated and economically independent. Similarly, Stratton (1994) argues that in *Anthills of the Savannah,* even though some women characters are depicted as subordinated to men, there are also female characters "portrayed as being in the forefront of history and feminine values are privileged over masculine ones" (p. 176). Equally, Feven (2009) finds that the Somali writer, Farah, in his novels: *Sardines* (1981) and *Close Sesame* (1983) represents female characters progressively as educated and economically self-sufficient as well as politically active and able to make decisions on their own stands. The Kenyan novelist Ngugi in *Devil on the Cross* (1982) also portrays women characters positively. Women characters in this novel actively brawl against socio-economic and political exploitation of women in the neo-colonial context of Kenya. In *Devil on the Cross*, Ngugi looks back to his earlier novels through intertextuality "indicating a desire to correct or to revise earlier images of women" (Stratton, 1994, p. 159). Therefore, women characters in contemporary male-authored novels are taking progressive and positive roles.

What is more, the recognition of African women writers has been progressively changing for many scholars of African literature in the Western world are now including African women writers in their courses. Affected by this change, many African universities where curricula had been Eurocentric and male-oriented also begin to include African women writers' works (Jick & Nkweteyim, 2016). African women-authored novels such as Grace Ogot's *The Promised Land* (1966) and *The Graduate* (1980), Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* (1966) and *Idu* (1970), Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa* (1970), Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero* (1975), Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979), Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988), Nadine Gordimer's *Burger's Daughter* (1979), *July's People* (1981), *A Sport of Nature* (1987) and *My Son's Story* (1990), Yvonne Vera's *Without a Nam*e (1994) and *Butterfly Burning* (1998), Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), Leila Aboulela's *Minaret* (2005), and Aminatta Forna's *Ancestor Stones* (2006) among others are well recognized and celebrated at national, continental and international levels. These novels dismantle the gender codes inscribed in the male literary tradition and redefine a new female identity whose role is not restricted to the norms constructed by patriarchy and colonialism. These female authors endeavor to create a more democratic culture and systematically fight against patriarchal suppression of women in their respective nations and

societies (Arndt, 2002; Begum, 2016; Cherop, 2015; Jick & Nkweteyim, 2016; Sadia, 2016; Stratton, 1994; Yunusy, 2015).

Even though women's positions in African literature as writers and as literary characters have been gradually progressing, still African women face countless problems. African feminists such as (Ezeigbo, 2007; Kolawole, 2004; Nnaemeka, 2003; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994; Ogunyemi, 1985; Oyewumi, 2003) few from many others concur that in addition to patriarchy, the long-lasting political, economic, and cultural effects of colonialism/neo-colonialism affect African women in the post-colonial world. In colonial discourses, African women were represented as ambivalent, submissive, backwards and slaves who were liberated from cultural suppression by Western colonizers (Oyewumi, 2003; Stratton, 1994).

The negative views of African people in general and women in particular in Western discourses are made through stereotypical considerations of African continent as a homogeneous, single state of primitivism. Conversely, even though there are shared traditional values among African cultures and peoples, it must be underscored that there also exist many sources of diversity. For example, in relation to gender and family structure even though some socio-cultural practices like polygamy and bride price allocations are common in many African cultures, they have varied meanings in different historical epochs and cultural contexts. Nevertheless, as scholarship on Africa had been monopolized by white men customarily, and Western white feminism as prolongations of the Western hegemony, its discourses shallowly generalized African women as foolish and powerless who submit themselves to patriarchal oppression and subjugation without interrogation. However, there were strong and resistant women who bravely and systematically fought against oppression in traditional societies of Africa (Nnaemeka, 2005; Oyewumi, 2003).

Henceforth, as Nnaemeka (2005) states, African feminist literary criticism addresses broader issues related with the oppression and manipulation of gender in knowledge production in addition to examining the place of Western feminist theory in the study of African literature. Thus, by clearly recognizing the cultural necessities and shifts, African feminism accentuates the significance of cultural knowledge in order to establish relevant and rational gender theorizing in African literature. African feminist literary theory considers the effect of colonialism and patriarchal structures as basic factors that shape the growth of modern African literature in general and novels in particular (Stratton, 1994). Therefore, full understanding of post-colonial African

literature cannot be attained without consideration of gender issues in relation to both colonially/neo-colonially and patriarchally driven problems of African women. Understanding the role of literary discourses in altering negative thoughts and practices on African women, the present research seeks to explore how selected contemporary African novels in English represent women's issues and female characters by considering both male and female authors.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Patriarchal structure and colonial or neo-colonial assumptions play prominent roles in oppressing African women "since colonized women almost by definition went unheard within their own patriarchal culture, they were doubly unheard under a colonial regime" (Bertens, 2001, p. 211). Colonialism/ neo-colonialism and patriarchal features operate in collaboration in order to suppress African women in various aspects of life so that African women have been subjected to double suppressions. African literatures or novels have great connection with socio-cultural, political and economic structures of their societies (Palmer, 2013) and mirror social change and practice from the focal point that enables us to understand women's position in a given society. Therefore, the novel as part of African literature may function as a tool either to reinforce or to resist patriarchal and colonial/neo-colonial oppression of women since its production is shaped by socio-cultural, political, and economic structures of its particular society.

Consequently, African feminist literary critics and novelists strive to tackle patriarchally and colonially/neo-colonially originated multiple problems of African women as well to re-write their forgotten contribution during combats for freedom and post-independence battles to establish a favorable and affluent continent. African female novelists have been revealing multiple oppressive structures and stifling realities in which African women live. Similarly, even though African feminist literary critics blame the earlier African male writers for giving marginal positions to their female characters, some prominent contemporary male African novelists have been progressively depicting female characters in ways that dismiss the outdated conventional patriarchal and neo/colonial projection of African women.

I argue that a comprehensive reception of African feminist literary criticism relies on a comparative study of literary texts authored by both men and women. In this connection, Stratton (1994) asserts, "When African literary discourse is considered from the perspective of gender, it

becomes evident that dialogic interaction between men's and women's writing is one of the defining features of the contemporary African literary tradition" (p. 1). Even so, there is a research gap in comparative study of novels by women and men writers. Particularly, African novels in English that have been published since 2000 have not been comprehensively and comparatively researched from African feminist perspective (see 2.2). Consequently, this research targets to determine ways in which contemporary African novels in English depict women's issues. The term *contemporary* in this dissertation refers to African novels in English, which were published from 2000-2016.

1.3 Objectives

The main objective of this research is to explore how women's issues are represented in the selected African novels in English. Concerning specific objectives, the present study attempts to:

- investigate whether the selected contemporary African novels in English reinforce or undermine patriarchal and colonial or neo-colonial views of African women;
- examine whether the selected contemporary African novels in English reveal the root causes of women's suppression;
- identify African feminist principles in the selected contemporary African novels in English;
- find out the similarities and differences among the selected contemporary African novels in English in relation with portrayal of women's issues.

1.4 Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following questions.

- What positions are given to female characters of the selected contemporary African novels in English?
- Do the selected contemporary African novels in English reinforce or criticize the patriarchal and colonial/neocolonial views of gender?
- What are African feminist principles reflected in the selected contemporary African novels in English?

- Are there similarities or differences among the selected contemporary African novels in English in relation to representation of women's issues across the regions?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of this research is to contribute to the study of contemporary Anglophone African literature. In addition, this study might give practical guidance to students in the field of literature on how to apply African feminist theory in analyzing novels. Besides, the role of literature in reflecting women's issues in the African context would be a vital source to divulge the wrong views about women. Investigating women's problems in this respect is a significant step in the process of mitigating their problems. As a result, this researcher hopes to expose mal-perception of and mal-practices on women as revealed in the selected novels. Hence, any reader who wants to support women's struggle against oppressive traditions and practices can get useful understanding from the results of the study. Moreover, gender issue is one of the most prominent issues of contemporary Africa. Hence, this study is expected to provide important insights to concerned governmental and non-governmental bodies in the continent in promoting gender equality and providing wider access for women to develop their all-rounded personality and benefit as well as to challenge and change society's stereotypical attitude towards women. What is more, other researchers who wish to conduct research from feminist perspectives may use the findings of this study as a reference.

1.6 Methodology and Procedures

This research is qualitative because it is engaged in the task of literary text analysis and interpretation. Ampofo, Betts and Osirim (2008) claim that qualitative research method has been the commonly applied approach to study representation of women's issues in contemporary African novels. Qualitative study consists of data collection methods such as grounded theory practice, ethnography, phenomenology, case study and textual analysis (Melakneh, 2008). This study employs textual analysis since it aims to examine how women are represented in the selected contemporary African novels in English. In order to come up with compatible theoretical framework, African feminist reading strategies are used (see 3.3.1). Besides, post-colonial comparative model is thought to be pertinent to obtain valid and reliable outcomes so that it is implemented in this study.

Concerning procedures of the analysis, first, synopsis of each selected novel is presented. Then, through critical reading of each novel, relevant extracts are chosen and categorized into sub-themes based on the employed theoretical framework. Finally, each novel is analyzed separately, and then comparative discussion of the selected novels is made in line with the predetermined objectives and research questions.

1.6.1 Basis of Selection

Years of publication has served as one of the prime selection criteria to choose the novels in question. As a result, contemporary African novels in English published between the years 2000-2016 are selected because such novels have received minimal critical consideration. Regional representation has also been taken as the basis of selection in order to make the research comprehensive and comparative. In this respect, many African feminists claim that root causes and intensity of African women's oppression vary from region to region as well as from country to country so that diverse identity and experiences of African women should get critical attention (Gatwiri & McLaren, 2016; Jacobs, 2011; Nnaemeka, 2005; Ogunyemi, 1985; Oyewumi, 2003). Thus, representative novels are selected from Eastern, Western, Southern, Central and Northern parts of the continent. Moreover, each region from which the sample novels are drawn is represented by male-authored and female-authored novels to offer perspectives of both gender groups since gender representation is taken as one of the selection criteria. However, a selection of one female-authored novel from Central Africa and one male-authored from North Africa is made because novels from these regions are very scarce in English.

What is more, canonicity or wider readability of the novels is taken as selection criterion. Kiguru (2016) states that canons are formed and preserved within critical and academic institutions as well as in cultural establishments such as public libraries, publishing houses, repertory theatres, and so on. Alkali, Jan, Roselezam and Talif (2013) claim that "even though the issue of canonicity has been disputable, canon should have open boundaries to tolerate new trends" (p. 238). This outlook deconstructs the Western dogmatic view of literary canon. "The African literary canon is related to the African experience, which has strong cultural and historical underpinnings" (Ojaide, 2012, p. 4). On the other hand, Stratton (1994) criticizes the post-colonial African literary canonization for ignoring women writers and marginalizing gender issues. Therefore, Stratton claims canonization should incorporate the texts' contribution in disclosing and resisting "the

nature of the influence of patriarchal social structures, both indigenous and imported, on the literary structures of fiction produced by contemporary African writers, men as well as women…also consider the influence of the racial dimension of colonial structure on African women's writing" (1994, p. 14). This implies the necessity of including women writers and feminist issues in the canonization criteria of contemporary African literature.

Besides, literary prize organizations for African Writings have prominent roles and functions in literary canonization, and they guide critics and readers in selecting an appropriate literary text (Kiguru, 2016). Hence, the prize industry is one of the main foundations of canon formation and even shortlists for the international prizes such as Caine and Commonwealth African literary awards are considered (Kiguru, 2016; Ojaide, 2012). Thereby, the concept of canon in this research is conceived in agreement with above stated points. To this end, all the selected novels in this dissertation reflect the social, cultural, historical and political matters of African people as well as deal with gender issues. They are also well recognized both at continental and global levels. In other words, either each selected author is acclaimed by critical and academic institutions or shortlisted for or won prize(s) for African Literature at international and continental/ national levels. In line with the above-discussed bases of selection, the following eight contemporary African novels in English are selected.

- From East Africa, *Kintu* (2014) by Ugandan woman writer, Jennifer Makumbi and *Hiding in Plain Sight* (2014) by Somali novelist, Nuruddin Farah;
- From West Africa, *Ancestor Stone* (2006) by Sierra Leonean female novelist, Aminatta Forna and *Season of Crimson Blossoms* (2016) by Nigerian novelist, Abubakar Adam Ibrahim;
- From Southern Africa, *Coconut* (2008) by South African female writer, Kopano Matlwa and *The Hairdresser of Harare* (2010) by Zimbabwean male novelist, Tendai Huchu;
- From Central Africa, *Minaret* (2005) by Sudanese female novelist, Leila Aboulela;
- From North Africa, *The Yacoubian Building* (2004) by Egyptian male author, Alaa Al Aswany

Kintu won the Kwani Manuscript Project in 2013. In addition, *Kintu* was nominated for the Etisalat Prize for Literature in 2014. Moreover, the author of *Kintu* Makumbi won the 2018 Windham Campbell Literary Prize Award and the 2014 Commonwealth Short Story Prize. The author of *Hiding in Plain Sight*, Nuruddin Farah is one of the prominent African novelists and wrote many novels, essays, short stories, plays and film scripts and received the 1980 and the 1998 literary awards of the English Speaking Union and the Neustadt Awards respectively. Likewise, the 2011 Commonwealth Literary Prize winner, Aminatta Forna wrote *Ancestor Stones*. Similarly, *Season of Crimson Blossoms* was shortlisted for 2016 Caine Prize for African literature and won the Nigeria Prize for Literature (the biggest literary prize in Africa) in 2016.

Equally, *Coconut* was first published in 2007 and won the European Union Literary Award in 2007 and the Wole Soyinka Prize for Literature in Africa in 2010. *The Hairdresser of Harare* was shortlisted for 2014 Caine Literary Prize and has been translated into German, French, Spanish, and Italian languages (Ohio University Press, 2015; Charles, 2016). Thus, *The Hairdresser of Harare* has been praised at international level. Likewise, *Minaret* (2005) was nominated for the Orange Prize and Dublin Award. The writer of *Minaret*, Leila Aboulela has received many literary awards; to mention few, Caine Prize for African Writing in 2000 and Fiction winner of the Scottish Book Award in 2011. *The Yacoubian Building* (2004) (Trans. by Humphrey T. Davies) is "an internationally-acclaimed novel" (Alkharashi, 2016, p. 45) by Alaa Al Aswany which was originally published in Arabic under the title (Amaret Yacoubian). It has been translated into 23 languages around the world. Aswany has received many awards for his novels: Bashraheel Award for Arabic novel in 2005, the International Cavafi award in 2005 (Greece), Great Novel Award in 2005 (France), Blue Metropolis Award for Arabic Literature in 2011 (Canada), Tiziano Terzani Literary Award in 2012 (Italy). Over all, the above eight selected novels have been analyzed and discussed either in doctoral dissertations or in Master's theses at continental or international academic institutions and in prominent journal articles.

Therefore, the finding of this study is delimited to the above-selected novels and their respective countries and regions. In addition, only contemporary Anglophone African novels are considered so that African novels in other languages are not considered in this study. Moreover, the theoretical framework of the research is delineated to African feminist approach to literature.

Furthermore, although there are four critical models within post-colonial criticism, only the comparative model is used in this research.

1.6.2 Post-colonial Comparative Model

Colonization has a lasting impact on the political, economic and cultural spheres of post-colonial people of the colonized nations. Post-colonial literary theory deals with the reading and writing of literature written in previously or currently colonized countries, or literature written in colonizing countries, which deals with colonization or colonized peoples (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2002). Post-colonial literatures are distinctively seen from dogmatic universal and Eurocentric literature. As a result, the Eurocentric model fails to entertain the multi-cultural and multi-dimensional post-colonial literatures that embrace various experiences and values of different post-colonial nations and societies.

Consequently, as Ashcroft et al. (2002) identify, there are four theoretical models or approaches in post-colonial literary criticism. These are National or Regional model, Racial or Black Writing model Comparative model and Wider Comparative or Hybridity model. National or regional model is interested in peculiar features of national or regional history and culture that reform history from the perspective of the silenced indigenous people. Black writing model focuses on common characteristics across various national literatures like the shared racial heirloom in literatures of the African Diaspora and considers racial issue as a foremost feature of cultural, economic and political discrimination. Comparative model deals with thematic and stylistic features that cross-nations and regions while hybridity model emphasizes the integration of cultural elements and practices from the colonizers and colonized cultures (Ashcroft et al., 2002).

From the above-mentioned four models, comparative model is used in this research because the research is concerned with regional and gender comparison of women's depiction in African novels in English. Ashcroft et al. (2002) contend that comparative model enables critics to see thematic parallels of the literatures produced by for instance, African writers from different regions of the continent. The comparative potential inherent in post-colonialism is manifested precisely in how it understands imperialism as a dynamic force field, where hegemony, coercion and subjugation are challenged by oppositional discourses. The oppositional discourses range from sly mimicry through open resistance to a multiplicity of textual re-appropriations in the

strategy of rewriting (Ashcroft et al., 2002; Melakneh, 2008). As a result, the comparative analysis gives a vantage point from which the researcher could determine thematic intertextuality among the chosen novels regarding the way women's issues are portrayed.

1.6.3 Organization of the Study

This research is organized into nine chapters. The first chapter presents the introductory information including background, statement of problem, objectives of the study, purpose of the study, and methodology and procedures of the research. The second chapter dwells upon providing review of related studies. Sample studies from Addis Ababa University and critical views on the selected African novels are reviewed. Chapter two also presents reviews on patriarchy in Africa, African women and post-independence problems, African women and colonialism/ neo-colonialism, and women and un-African religions.

The third chapter is concerned with the theoretical framework that has relations with this research. Therefore, feminism, post-colonial feminism and African feminism are discussed for the analysis of this research is based on African feminism. Chapters from four to eight deal with analyses of the selected novels. Accordingly, the fourth chapter focuses on the selected East African novels while the fifth, sixth and seventh chapters provide analyses of the novels selected from West, Southern, and Central and North African regions respectively. The eighth chapter presents comparative discussion of the chosen novels from the five regions of the continent. Lastly, the ninth chapter is the final one that deals with the concluding remarks and recommendations given based on the findings of the research.

Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature

This chapter presents review of sample studies, critical views on the selected novels, patriarchy in Africa, African women and post-independence failure, African women and colonialism/neo-colonialism, and women and un-African religions. The aim of the review is to identify the research gap and the extent of the problem to be addressed as well as to get preliminary acquaintance with the selected novels.

2.1 Review of Sample Studies

In this section, review of doctoral dissertations and master's theses conducted in Addis Ababa University (AAU) regarding novel analysis from feminist perspective is provided. To begin with, Melakneh (2008) raises issues of African women in his dissertation entitled "Post-colonialism and Mainstream Anglophone African Novel /ca. 1970- 2000/". He has examined many post-colonial issues including women's representation in novels such as *Abyssinian Chronicles* (2000) by Moses Isegawa, *Kill Me Quick* (1973) by Meja Mwangi, *Sweet and Sour Milk* (1979) by Nuruddin Farah, *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) by Chinua Achebe, *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1970) by A. K Armah, *Bones* (1988) by Chenjerai Hove, *Disgrace* (1999) by J. M Coetzee, and *The Heart of Redness* (2000) by Zakes Mda. Melakneh's dissertation lends to the present researcher insights in relation to comparative analysis of the selected novels for the present study. Melakneh considers male-authored novels written from 1970-2000; whereas the present study examines novels published from 2000-2016 and written by both male and female authors.

Gebreyesus (2008) in his doctoral dissertation entitled "Progressive Gender Power Hierarchy in Seven Tigrigna Novels" has explored Tigrigna novels using feminist theory. He concludes that most of the analyzed novels show gradual destruction of patriarchal ideology. Gebreyesus's research is related to the current study because it deals with issues of women in Ethiopian (Tigrigna) novels. However, the current research differs for it deals with African novels in English. Gebreyesus's research is on Ethiopian novels particularly, on novels written in Tigrigna Language. As it concentrates on a single nation, it cannot represent the continent. However, the current research is targeted to address five regions of the continent using African feminism as the theoretical framework.

Teshome (2013) has also conducted a feminist study in his doctoral dissertation entitled "A Feminist Reading of Selected Novels in Afan Oromo: A study in Deconstruction". Teshome's study focuses on four Afan Oromo novels such as *Hawwii* (2003), *Kusaa Gadoo* (1991), *Illa* (2007) and *Dhoksaa Jireegyaa* (2011). He analyzes representation of female characters in these novels from feminist deconstructivist perspective with the notion of a woman's body, subject/ object, motherhood and knowledge. Teshome concludes that the investigated novels deal with themes such as dismantling institutional motherhood and conventional family and marriage. Teshome's study is also connected with the current research for it explores women's issues in novels. Yet, as it discusses only Oromo novels, it is different from the research at hand which is concerned with African novels in English that are selected from five regions of the continent.

Similarly, Daniel (2018) has done a master's thesis under the title "Feminism in Achebe's and Gordimer's Novels". Daniel has comparatively analyzed *No Longer at Ease* (1960) by the West African male author, Chinua Achebe and *None to Accompany Me* (1994) by the South African female novelist, Nadine Gordimer. Based on the analysis, he concludes that Achebe's and Gordimer's feminist positions display the progressive view of feminism in post-colonial novels as the roles of the female characters in these novels have been gradually altering in a positive way. Since Daniel's thesis has comparatively analyzed the West African male-authored and South African female-authored novels, it provides good insights into the research at hand. However, as it explores only two novels, which were written before 2000, it differs from the present research with regard to period and scope. The present research deals with novels, which are published after 2000 and covers novels chosen from five parts of the continent.

Likewise, Feven (2009) in a master's thesis entitled "A Feminist Reading of Nuruddin Farah's First Trilogy: Variations on the Theme of an African Dictatorship" has conducted literary analysis. Her study focuses on examining the level of depiction of gender typecasting and degree of females' resistance to such stereotypes in Farah's three novels: *Sweet and Sour Milk* (1979), *Sardines* (1981) and *Close Sesame* (1983). The result of this study shows that these novels address the most important problems of femininity like economic dependency, societal rejection, and lack of political participation. Feven's thesis again has strong connection with the present enquiry for it dealt with women's issues in Farah's novels since his latest novel, *Hiding in Plain Sight* (2014) is one of the selected novels in this dissertation. Nevertheless, Feven's thesis is narrower than the

current study that comparatively scrutinizes contemporary African novels in English, which are written by both male and female authors from different parts of the continent.

Moreover, Gebremariam (2007) in a master's thesis entitled "Feminist Trends in Achebe's Post-colonial Novels" analyzed three novels of Chinua Achebe, *No Longer at Ease* (1960), *A Man of the People* (1966) and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987). He examines the novels based on Marxist feminist literary criticism. Based on the findings, he concludes that Achebe's progressively changing attitude towards women's roles in Nigeria is emphasized in his novels. As Gebremariam's thesis discusses African novels in English from feminist perspective, it gives some insights to the research at hand. Nonetheless, it is confined to Achebe's novels, which were published in 1960s and 1980s and uses Marxist feminist approach; whereas, the present study deals with African novels in English, which have been published from 2000 to 2016 and written by both men and women from Eastern, Western, Southern, Central and Northern parts of the continent using African feminist theoretical framework.

2.2 Critical Views on the Selected Novels

Review of studies presented under this heading focuses on the selected eight novels in this research: *Kintu* (2014), *Hiding in Plain Sight* (2014), *Ancestor Stones* (2006), *Season of Crimson Blossoms* (2016), *Coconut* (2008), *The Hairdresser of Harare* (2010), *Minaret* (2005) and *The Yacoubian Building* (2004). This review is intended to get acquaintance with the novels and to identify a research gap. Although some of the previous studies conducted on these novels are not directly related with feminist issues, they do have indirect relation with the research at hand since they are concerned with the same novels that are selected for the research at hand.

To begin with, Amolo (2017) has written a master's thesis entitled "(Re-) Mythification of (B) Uganda in Jennifer Makumbi's *Kintu*". Amolo's analysis dwells upon the interaction between gender issues and narrative structure of the novel. The researcher finds out that in this novel, Makumbi (2014) has used the techniques of narratology in connecting the past legendary narratives of Buganda with the post-colonial realistic narratives of Uganda in a way that disrupts the patriarchal myth of Kintu and brings women to front line in establishing modern Uganda. Although Amolo's study gives insights related with narrative structure and technique of the novel, its analysis of gender issues is not thorough as it gives much attention to narrative and mythical

aspects of the novel. In addition, the researcher does not compare the novel with other novels. Thus, the study at hand fills this gap by examining *Kintu* via African feminist literary theory.

Again, Mwesigire (2018) has done a study on *Kintu* in an article entitled "Beyond the Afropolitan Post-nation: The Contemporaneity of Jennifer Makumbi's Kintu". In analyzing issues of contemporaneity in the novel, Mwesidire uses a contemporaneous reading strategy of post-national criticism. The researcher argues that *Kintu* exhibits an inherent contemporaneity by recounting narrations from 1750s Kintu Kidda through the 1960s, 1970s, and 1990s to post 2000, and thus it has a synchronized subsistence and constitutes in a corresponding order. Mwesigire's study is related with the research at hand for it examines the novel, *Kintu*. Nonetheless, despite the fact that women's issues are of the prominent subjects that the novel deals with, Mwesigire's research has given minimal attention to gender theme and does not employ African feminism, and thus the present study makes African feminist criticism on the novel by comparing it with other novels selected from five parts of Africa.

Moreover, Lipenga (2017) has also made literary criticism on *Kintu* in the article entitled "The (un) making of a man: fathers and sons in the African novel". Lipenga has examined representation of masculinity in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Zakes Mda's *The Sculptors of Mapungubwe* (2013), Leila Aboulela's *Lyrics Alley* (2012) and Jennifer Makumbi's *Kintu* (2014). The researcher focuses on four male characters of *Kintu* such as Kintu, Baale, Kalema and Ntwire and argues that the novel exhibits how father educates his sons regarding how to behave in an accepted manner. Hence, the novel portrays penalties resulted from wrong connection between Kintu and Kalema whom he has adopted as a son and the curse instigated from this has been traced as generational curse. Since this article deals with *Kintu* and comparatively examines male and female-authored novels from different parts of the continent, it is related to the research at hand, but it is much narrower than the present research as it analyzes only male characters. Besides, it does not explore African feminist issues in the novel so that the research at hand attempts to address fully.

Concerning *Hiding in Plain Sight*, Moolla (2018) has scrutinized it under the title, "Post-national Paradoxes: Nuruddin Farah's Recent Novels and Two Life Narratives in Counterpoint". Moolla's study shows that in *Hiding in Plain Sight*, Farah highlights the impacts of globalization and trans-nationalism on subject formation, personal and family relations in a post-colonial context of

Somalia. Since Moolla's study has dealt with *Hiding in Plain Sight*, it has relation to the research at hand as it touches the novels depiction of family relations, but it has seen the notion of family from the perspective of globalization, yet the present research examines the novel's portrayal of family relation based on the notion of African feminism. Besides, although there are many themes of gender in Farah's novel, Moolla has not explored them in detail so that the present study examines representation of issues of African feminism in *Hiding in Plain Sight* in comparison with other selected African novels from different African nations.

Odar (2018) has also made analysis on *Hiding in Plain Sight* with the title, "The Use of Allegory in Presentation of Disintegration in Nuruddin Farah's Hiding in Plain Sight and Crossbones". In this research, Odar has scrutinized the significance of allegory in the presentation of Somalia's disintegration with an assumption that there are textual metaphorical elements in the two novels. Thereby, the study focuses on the metaphorical expressions of the two novels in relation to character typology, style and plot structure. Odar concludes that in *Hiding in Plain Sight*, Farah uses metaphorical elements to prove that civil discord and colonial legacy have led to dislodgment of Somalis from Somalia. Odar's study also does not considered feminist themes of the novel that the current study focuses on.

In *Ancestor Stones*, Yunusy (2015) has analyzed it in the doctoral dissertation entitled "Politics of the Family in Contemporary East and West African Women's Writing". Yunusy scrutinizes how twenty-first century East and West African women writers represent the institution of family in a way that challenges their older generation writer counterparts. The finding shows that contemporary women writers do not deny history, but they depend on their literary grandmothers and mothers to express what is expected of the post-colonial nation and maintain the importance of family in the making of the geo-political nation. Yunusy's dissertation has strong connection with the dissertation at hand since it considers Forna's *Ancestor Stones* and analyzes it from African feminist perspective. However, it differs from the present study in two ways. First, it compares the novel with only East African women authored novels focusing on only family themes while the current inquiry compares *Ancestor Stones* with novels written by both men and women from five African regions as well as deal with various gender themes of the novel. Second, Yunusy has mainly focused on Ogunyemi (1985)'s womanism as theoretical framework, but the

present research in addition to womanism, employs other theoretical models such as stiwanism, motherism, and nego-feminism.

Annie (2013) has written a literary criticism on *Ancestor Stones* in the article entitled "Women Writing Nationhood Differently: Affiliated Critique in Novels by Forna, Atta, and Farah". Annie's article deals with novels such as Forna's *Ancestor Stones* (2006), Sefi Atta's *Swallow* (2010), and Cristina Ali Farah's *Madre Piccola* (2007). Annie argues that these novelists depict gender injustice as one of the causes as well as one of the symptoms of broader failures of the nation-state in the African countries of the authors' origins respectively Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and Somalia. The article has also similarity with the present inquiry as it deals with *Ancestor Stones* from a gender perspective. However, its scope is narrower than the study at hand as it is confined with the topic of nationhood. In addition, Annie has not used African feminist theory and not compared the novel with other male-authored novels, and thus the present study fills this gap.

Regarding *Season of Crimson Blossoms,* Audee and Bijimi (2019) have published a research article entitled "Trauma, Reminiscences and the Memory Symbol in Selected Characters in Abubakar Adam Ibrahim's Season of Crimson Blossoms". The aim of this article has been to investigate relationships between literature and society in the lens of Freudian psychoanalytic literary criticism. The finding of the research exhibits that Ibrahim's novel has dealt with psychological issues related with politics, religion, and socio-culture through an exploration of the inner recesses of the characters' psyche and the elements that underlie them. Similarly, Ekweremadu (2016) in the article entitled "Psychoanalyzing Abubakar Adam Ibrahim's Season of Crimson Blossoms" also analyzes Ibrahim's novel from a psychoanalytic perspective. The researcher concludes that whether intentionally or not, Ibrahim in this novel develops and even promotes Freudian psychoanalysis because the novel dominantly presents the effects of suppressed emotions and memories, and the instrumentality of dreams. These two articles have relation to the present research for they explore *Season of Crimson Blossoms* as well as they see few gender issues from a psychological point of view. However, the present research differs from them in its comprehensive analysis of the novel's representation of African feminist issues and it compares the novel with other contemporary African novels in English that are selected from five regions of the continent.

In addition, James and Dauda (2016) in their article entitled "The Cultural Realms and Their Implications for Development: A study of Abubakar Adam Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms*" explore the portrayal of tradition in Ibrahim's novel. The researchers find out that Ibrahim reveals the effect of harmful traditions on the life of the characters. Even though the researcher's include gender issue in their analysis of the novel, it is minimal since it exhibits multiple issues of women that can be examined through a theoretical framework of African feminism. The research at hand aims to fill such research gaps relating the novel with other novels chosen in this study.

When we see Matlwa's *Coconut*, Dlamini (2015) analyzes it in the doctoral dissertation entitled "The Transformation of Masculinity in Contemporary Black South African Novels". Dlamini has examined the novel from the perspectives of racism and acculturation and concludes that Matlwa exhibits how post-colonial South African people are influenced by legacy of colonialism and echo the colonial subjugation of indigenous cultural traditions and black people. Since Damini's dissertation examines race and culture issues in Matlwa's *Coconut* it has some relationship with the present dissertation for it also investigates the novel's representation of women characters and their responses to race and identity issues. However, while the present research uses African feminism as a theoretical framework, Damini's dissertation does not analyze the novel through lenses of African feminism although it deals with both male and female characters. Besides, the aforementioned researcher has treated only South African novels while the present dissertation compares the novel's representation of women and African feminist issues with other novels selected from different regions of the continent.

Moreover, Scott (2012) in a master's thesis entitled "Apartheid Legacies and Identity Politics in Kopano Matlwa's Coconut, Zoë Wicomb's Playing in the Light and Jacques Pauw's Little Ice Cream Boy" analyzes from the perspective of alienation and identity crisis. Based on the analysis, Scott argues that the basis of the identity crises experienced by the characters of *Coconut* emanated from the fact that they have internalized Western cultural values. Scott's investigation of the novel in addition to introducing the novel, gives good insight to the current researcher on identity issues. Nevertheless, it has overlooked other African feminist themes of the novel, so the current study covers the observed gap and compares the novel with other selected African novels.

Furthermore, Hlongwane (2013) examines *Coconut* in the article entitled "In Every Classroom Children Are Dying: Race, Power and Nervous Conditions in Kopano Matlwa's Coconut". Hlongwane argues that *Coconut* bids an appropriate examination of the power of whiteness, even in South Africa where the black majority now governs. Characters in this novel are not only culturally lost and painfully ashamed of their blackness; they live in a country where they are seemingly not allowed to be black. This article is also primarily concerned with identity matters, and so it does not deal with women's issues. Hence, the current research scrutinizes *Coconut* focusing on its gender themes using African feminist theory as the analytical framework.

Concerning *The Hairdresser of Harare*, Mtenje's (2016) doctoral dissertation entitled "Contemporary Fictional Representations of Sexualities from Authoritarian African Contexts" has explored it. Mtenje concludes that Huchu's novel shows post-colonial Zimbabwe's political circumstances where homosexuality is banned by both formal state decrees and the informal regulatory systems such as social discrimination, religious condemnation and the like. Mtenje's dissertation is related with the research at hand for it deals with *The Hairdresser of Harare* from gender perspective, but it focuses on the novel's treatment of homosexuality. On the other hand, the current research examines the novel via African feminist theoretical principles that emphasize multiple roots of oppression that push back African woman and her society from freedom.

Besides, Charles (2016) has explored *The Hairdresser of Harare* in a master's thesis under the title "The Zimbabwean Crisis: Locations of Writing and the Literary Representation of Zimbabwe's 'Lost Decade." Charles's analysis demonstrates that Huchu represents the impact of socio-cultural crisis on contemporary Zimbabweans Even though Charles has dealt with gender issues, the analysis focuses on homosexuality and gives less attention to other themes of feminism and the thesis is delimited to Zimbabwe's novels so that it is much narrower than the present dissertation in scope. Accordingly, understanding the relevance of analyzing the novel from African feminist perspectives, the current researcher selects *Hairdresser of Harare* as one of the representatives of Southern African novels.

Moreover, Mhandu (2017) has published research article on Huchu's novel under the title "Hair stylization and the "Art-of living": The case of Tendai Huchu's The Hairdresser of Harare". In this article, Mhandu finds out that the novel shows how characters have fashioned various styles of hairdressing to gain pleasure. The novel reveals people's interest to hybridize local trends of

hairdressing with global trends as the beauty salon in the novel gathers people from different cultural, racial, political, sexual and economic experiences. This article has explored the novel in question from the perspective of hybridity, especially in relation to people's preference of hairstyle although it has dealt with some female characters in the novel. Nevertheless, it does not explore the novel using African feminist literary theory so that the present dissertation fills the observed research gaps by comparing with other selected novels from different parts of the continent.

With regard to *Minaret*, Nesrin (2014) has conducted a master's thesis with the title "Representation of British Muslim Identities in Leila Aboulela's Minaret and Nadeem Aslam's Maps for Lost Lovers" based on post-colonial theoretical framework. The researcher contends that *Minaret* presents a compact understanding of Islamic religion demonstrating British Muslim identity as an intricate. Because Nesrin's thesis has studied *Minaret*, it has connection with the current study. Nevertheless, the thesis primarily focuses on Muslim identity in Britain where the novel is partly set while the current study investigates the representation of women in the novel using African feminism as a theoretical framework.

In like manner, Mazloum (2015) has also examined *Minaret* in the journal article under the title "Displaced' Muslim Women in Monica Ali's Brick Lane and Leila Aboulela's Minaret". The researcher explores depiction of female Muslim characters by comparing the two novels using Spivak's notion of displacement. Based on the analysis, Mazloum argues that both novels' representation of female characters from Muslim background creates an ample perspective of the discouraging experiences of migrant women in the Western world as the experiences of the two female protagonists in both novels show. The two Muslim women protagonists regardless of personal and cultural differences have sympathies to an Islamic custom, and they challenge Western essentialist ideas in their day-to day activities. This article has connection to the research at hand since it examines Aboulela's *Minaret* from post-colonial feminist perspective. However, the present research analyzes *Minaret* using African feminist theory by exploring all gender themes of the novel and comparing it with other selected contemporary African novels in English, yet Mazloum's analysis of the novel is much narrow as it focuses on the single female character.

Moreover, Karawi and Bahar (2014) have also studied *Minaret* under the title "Negotiating the Veil and Identity in Leila Aboulela's Minaret" using the conceptual framework of Victor Turner's liminality and Homi Bhabha's hybridity and the third space. The researchers conclude that the

studied novel contains detailed subject on Muslim women's struggle to establish moderate Islamic traditional identity by presenting veil as a symbol of traditional Islamic culture. Since this article concentrates on Aboulela's *Minaret*, it has some link with this study. However, it only considers women's issues from the Islamic costume angle and does not question the novel from African feminist viewpoint. Thus, the current dissertation fills this gap by comparing the novel with other novels from five parts of the continent through post-colonial comparative model.

Concerning *The Yacoubian Building*, Masry (2016) analyzes it in a doctoral dissertation entitled "Representations of Political Violence in Contemporary Middle Eastern Fiction". Based on the analysis, Masry concludes that the novel depicts multiple issues of post-colonial Egypt, particularly in the 1990s, under the rule of President Hosni Mubarak. The novel reveals Jihadist groups orientation towards the torment of Islamists to provoke violence against Mubarak's government. Masry's research has related to this research because it has scrutinized the Egyptian novel *The Yacoubian Building*. Nevertheless, it gives minimal attention to the novel's representation of women's issues although such issues are one of the dominant themes of the novel. Thus, the current study fills this gap by analyzing the novel using African feminist theory.

Areqi (2017) also explores *The Yacoubian Building* in the journal article entitled "Culture, Classicism, Community and Human Relations in Contemporary Arabic Fiction". The researcher contends that Aswany's novel depicts multiple issues of contemporary Egypt such as traditional, communal, governmental, sexual, and spiritual interactions. The novel shows that personal benefits substitute socio-cultural and religious (Islamic) principles in the contemporary society of Cairo dwelling on The Yacoubian Building as the community embraces the Western cultural values by departing the indigenous ones. Particularly, the social affair of the community has been weak even among very close family members. This article has also connected to the present research as it deals with *The Yacoubian Building* from multiple perspectives. However, its concern with the gender themes of the novel has been very little as it deals with the novel's representation of homosexuality more and it does not discuss issues of African feminism considering the novel as Arabic literature. Hence, the present research examines how *The Yacoubian Building* represents women's issues through African feminist theoretical framework.

Furthermore, Alkharashi (2016) studies *The Yacoubian Building* in the journal article entitled "Modern Arabic Fiction in English: The Yacoubian Building a Case in Point". This article aims to

discuss modern Arabic fiction in English translation. Humphrey Davies translated the novel from Arabic into English in 2004. Alkharashi states that the novel has gained much appreciation and fame being translated into 22 other languages besides English. *The Yacoubian Building* became very popular around the globe due to the fact that it exhibits prominent contemporary political and cultural themes. Besides, the translators' and publishers' proper conception of the needs of the contemporary readers around the world has helped them to explore the novel and make it accessible in international book markets in various languages. Although this article focuses on the same novel selected in the research at hand, it discusses ways on how the novel has achieved wider readability through translation, and it neglects feminist issues. Understanding the prominence of gender themes in the novel, the present researcher examines *The Yacoubian Building* based on African feminist theoretical framework in comparison with other selected novels from various regions of Africa.

2.3 Patriarchy in Africa

Among the obstacles to African women's liberty is the patriarchal ideology that pushes them back to marginal positions. Patriarchy ideology wields direct pressure on women through tradition, religion, customary law and gender roles (Feven, 2009; Kolawole, 2004; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994). Accordingly, a man is the head of a family and everything belonging to the family is considered the man's property on which he has absolute power to decide (Ampofo et al., 2008; Cherop, 2015). Patriarchy also defines "men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive; whereas it casts women as emotional, irrational, weak and submissive" (Tyson, 2006, p. 85).

African feminists (such as Ezeigbo, 2007; Nnaemeka, 2003; Oyewumi, 2003; Steady, 2011) few from many others argue that African women have not been subjugated to the extent that Western feminist discourses portray in traditional African cultures. Nevertheless, most lower class African women could not be considered as enjoying equal status and benefit with men in practice for the basic framework of African society is determined by patriarchy (Jacobs, 2011). Ezeaku (2014) adds that "traditional Africa was not a haven for African woman…harmful traditional and social practices strong enough to denigrate womanhood through unlimited polygamy, incestuous sexual exploitation, arranged marriages, seclusion, infanticide, female circumcision and starvation" (p. 26). Ohaeto (2015) has also noted that aspects of African patriarchal practices have been carried out through "political injustice, girl-child marriage, domestic violence, women trafficking and

kidnapping, marital rape, deprivation of various rights and many more" (p. 59). This implies that patriarchy operates in Africa in many ways that put multiple burdens on every African woman's shoulder in a way that degrade her personality and position in a society.

Kambarami (2006) shows that in various African cultures, patriarchy is propagated through socialization method, which begins from a family and expands into other sectors of society like religion, education, business and politics, where men are given absolute power to governor women. Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) confirms that "African men seem to be locked into gender roles which they want to keep. They say a father cannot be equal to his daughter, or a husband cannot be equal with wife" (p. 209). Such stereotypical subordination of women emanates from patriarchal socializations. For instance, once a girl reaches puberty stage, she is trained to be skillful in handling indoor activities such as childrearing and taking care of her future husband as well as to be an obedient and modest wife. In contrast, the male child is socialized in ways that empower him to hold socio-economic, political and religious leadership (Kambarami, 2006; Ohaeto, 2015).

Surprisingly, women by themselves support the patriarchal domination as grandmothers and mothers play an active role in shaping girls to submit themselves to patriarchal subjugations and conditioning. In most cultures of Africa, the child socialization task is given to women, and they teach girls to be obedient and submissive to their future husbands while they socialize boys to be powerful and superior to their wives (Kambarami, 2006; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994; Segueda, 2015). Thereby, many women accept their subordination from patriarchal socialization, and such women even hate other women who claim freedom.

Researchers such as (Cherop, 2015; Kambarami, 2006; McFerson, 2012; Ohaeto, 2015) have illustrated that in African family systems such as in Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe among others, a male child is preferred to female with the intention of male rule female by right of birth. Even if the male child is not the first born in the family, he is automatically considered as one who should protect and look after his sisters. The female child is more victimized for she marries out and joins another family whilst the male child guarantees the subsistence of the family name by bringing additional members into the family. McFadden (2001) scornfully criticizes African patriarchal traditions as follows:

> Those legal systems that are partial and often blatantly patriarchal: for example, the persistence of notions of male conjugal rights; refusals to recognize marital rape as a crime; allowance of polygamy and rampant sexual mobility; notions of paternity which define children as the property of the man rather than emphasizing the responsibilities and obligations of parenting in democratic family relationships; inheritance practices that allow men to inherit women as a form of property/as slaves of male controlled families (quoted in Alkali et al., 2013, p. 240).

The above excerpt denotes that African women have been suppressed in various ways and even legal schemes in the continent are structured against women in a patriarchal manner. Many African extended families are organized in lineage groups, incorporating notions of a founding father and with membership, land access and property passing in the male line. Upon marriage, women reside in their husband's locale; children belong to him; and the status and treatment of the wife depends on the marriage contract (McFerson, 2012). When one's husband dies, the widow is expected to be inherited by one of her late husband's brothers. Conversely, if a man is widowed, he is given his late wife's younger sister as a wife and the wife he is given must be a virgin (Kambarami, 2006).

In rural parts of the continent, while men's responsibility is limited to agricultural field works, women are compelled to work both at home and at agricultural fields. In most cases, a woman starts work in the morning earlier than her husband. Waking up before her husband, she must cook breakfast and then she is obliged to go with him to the field. Even after the fieldwork, she engages in collecting firewood while the husband comes back home for rest, and more she spends her all days and much of the nights fetching water, cooking food, nursing children and the like; whereas the husband is still at rest (Segueda, 2015). Similar circumstances can also be observed in urban parts of the continent since household routines are regarded as exclusively women's duty. Husband and wife may spend their days both working in office, but when they come back home after office duty, the wife is expected to prepare dinner, nurse children and even get up earlier than her husband in the morning to prepare breakfast and lunch to the family while the husband is sleeping (Arndt, 2002).

Such subjugation of women has been reflected in early African literature as women characters are presented in roles that restricted them to bearing and rearing children, satisfying their husbands sexually as well as physically taking care of them and their entire household. The famous African male writers such as Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Camara Laye, Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Robert Serumaga, David Rubadiri, Peter Nazareth, Davis Sebukima, Godfrey Kalimugogo, Meja Mwangi and others have been accused for such projection of African women. Thus, gender inequality is visible in these authors' fictional works for their female characters are at the margins of their narration while male characters occupy the central places. This ironically maintains the colonizers' subjugation of the African women (Begum, 2016; Jick & Nkweteyim, 2016; Sadia, 2016).

2.4 African Women and Post-independence Failure

African people had fought against colonialism with the hope to build free and prosperous post-independent nations where the colonized black Africans would enjoy comfortable life. However, they have not yet met their wishes for the black political elites who succeeded the colonial power became greedy and selfish as soon as they seized the political power. The burden of post-colonial failure is much loaded on the backs of Sub-Saharan African women as Mikell (1997) notes:

> States in sub-Saharan Africa have gone through many crises: the failure of male-dominated, multi-party politics or state socialism in the aftermath of independence; the onset of coups and establishment of military regimes; the economic instability that culminated in the collapse of national economies; the imposition of controversial, Western-mediated structural-adjustment programs; and, finally, the pressures to democratize governance processes so as to involve the people (p. 1).

This indicates that women have been segregated in various aspects of their respective society in post-colonial Africa. The gender oppression of post-independence African women has been interwoven with other political, economic, cultural and social forms of oppression. In many post-colonial African nations, elites and political leaders fail to realize that women possess intellectual capacities that enable them to produce problem-solving ideas in the endeavor to develop the continent. Steady (2006) maintains that despite the fact that African women play indispensible part in fighting against poverty, post-colonial African poverty annihilation paradigm has ignored women's role and gender issues. Quoting Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) (2011),

Segueda (2015) also states that in sub-Saharan Africa, half (50%) of agricultural workers are women; however, in contemporary African contexts, they are much segregated and marginalized in various ways. Even though post-colonial women hold greater burdens at family and society levels, they are victims of socio-economic and political marginalization in many contemporary African nations. Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) further notices the main cause of this problem:

> All theoreticians of African Liberation have failed to confront the issue of gender within the family or to confront the family as a site for social transformation. They will talk about changing society, mobilizing Africa, but not about the issue of the relation of men to women; gender relations (p. 210).

Policies of post-colonial development endeavors of the continent have not been out of gender bias, and therefore, ignorance of gender issues can be one of the reasons of post-independence development failure of African nations. For example, "across the continent, recent efforts to promote gender equality under the formal agreement of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) have been criticized for failing to identify and implement specific gender policies and strategies" (Ampofo et al., 2008, p. 334). Therefore, post-colonial African political, social, and economic leadership has been male-centered although many nations of the continent have written gender equality on paper, it has been failed to be seen in practice.

Moreover, in the post-colonial decolonization struggles, gender issues have been overlooked for the full attention has been given to fight cultural imperialism. Peterson (1995) asserts that in discourses that were prepared to promote struggle against colonial/ neo-colonial dominations of Africa, "women's issues were not only ignored, but they were also sacrificed in the service of dignifying the past, and restoring African self-confidence" (quoted in Tyagi, 2014, p. 46). Even African women's contribution during anti-colonial struggle has been ignored and thus remained with minimal documentation in post-colonial contexts.

Countless African women had served in African liberation militaries that fought for political independence from European colonial rule. Jacobs (2011) shows that African women have attained certain great moments of solidarity and political victories in their roles as mothers. For instance, women in South Africa actively fought against apartheid along with leading their home and nurturing children. On the same note, Arndt (2002) states that "in many African countries

such as Kenya, Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa, the women's movements have important roots in the anticolonial and liberation struggle" (p. 25). Directly or indirectly, African women have rendered paramount contribution during the fight to eradicate colonialism from the continent. Similarly, Steady (2011) states the following witness about African women's role during anti-colonial wars and struggles.

> A number of African countries also have a legacy of female warriors or female militancy, such as the Amazons of Cameroon, the Igbo Women's War of 1929 in Nigeria, women in the Mau Mau Movement of Kenya, and female warriors of the nationalist movements of Guinea. Female participation in the nationalist struggles for independence from colonial rule in many countries was widespread (p. 27).

However, African women's war stories are rarely written to be read or recorded to be seen or to be heard (Aaronette, 2007; Ampofo et al., 2008). Hence, while glorifying male anti-colonial combatants, the post-colonial discourses of African nationalism marginalized women's roles. This is because patriarchal ideology "creates difficulties for men reconciling the fact of women's participation in the liberation struggle with that of exclusion from national politics" (Stratton, 1994, p. 17). It maintains that the post-colonial African male elite are not supportive to women, but they are also women's oppressors. As a result, post-independence African "women are subject to the double burden while being acutely underrepresented in all socially significant positions of power in the economy, politics, and the educational sector" (Arndt, 2002, p. 23). This also emanates from the fact that post-colonial African educational systems do not consider gender issues. They fail to realize that when male and female children start attending school they come with inequalities already shaped within them. The post-colonial educational systems in Africa have sustained the colonial legacy in a way that maintains the inequalities that exist between girls and boys (Cherop, 2015; Kambarami, 2006). Such sexist partiality results that women and girls continue to be educated at an inferior rate compared to their male counterparts in many African countries in post-independence contexts.

For example, McFerson (2012) shows that in post-colonial Sierra Leone, women's literacy rate has been observed as much lower than men have. Girls are seldom educated beyond primary school. Similarly, Kambarami (2006) criticizes the educational system in Zimbabwe for being

gender insensitive since it assures male models, male-authored textbooks and theories in a way that relegate women's academic participation. On the same note, Cherop (2015) finds out that in Kenya, textbooks that are used in schools sustain the colonial subjugation of women by depicting boys as clever, intellectual, tough, and rough adventurous whereas girls are depicted as soft people who enjoy carrying out household duties. As a result, very few women have been enrolled in science courses and especially in engineering. The way women and men follow different courses serves to reinforce inequality in terms of the kinds of occupations women enter, and this affects their position in societies where they live.

According to Segueda (2015), researches on post-colonial African school materials show that in many African curricula, school books are designed in a patriarchal way because most school books "rarely picture women as managers, pilots, lawyers, scientists, doctors, or heads of state" (p. 14). Such stereotypical representation of women as a continued influence of colonialism for the reason that during colonialism women were much discriminated from education while wider opportunities were opened for African men (Stratton, 1994).

Particularly, in rural areas, much lower educational levels for women across the continent and the continuing presence of women in agricultural and other rural activities rather than in the professions and other income-producing activities become additional obstacles of women's freedom in Africa (Ezeaku, 2014; Mikell, 1997). As a result, "in contemporary Africa in public life, as well as in the family, only unofficial opportunities for influence are available to women...As a rule, official power is reserved for men" (Arndt, 2002, p. 22). Thereby, among other consequences, high illiteracy has major political implications, as the lack of women's voice relegates their issues to the back burner.

In sum, African women have been suffering from social, economic and political challenges that have direct relation with the post-colonial failure of the African nations. Post-colonial disgusting circumstances of the many countries in African, particularly those in sub-Sahara have been reflected through each nation's inability to bring all rounded development where people, both men and women enjoy equality and lead suitable life in many aspects. Post-colonial Africa has been characterized with civil war, corruption, poverty, dictator governments, lack of democracy, poor infrastructure, illiteracy, backward agriculture, economic dependency, unfair distribution of wealth

and resources and many other impediments. The most victims of such problems are ordinary women and children.

2.5 African Women and Colonialism/ Neo-colonialism

Colonialism had destroyed indigenous African cultures while promoting Western/ European cultural values with stereotypical assumption of civilizing backward and primitive African people. The colonial use of stereotypical binary oppositions that contributed to the maintenance of the difference between the "superior" colonizer and the "inferior" colonized was also extended to undermine African women. "A sexual allegory—an allegory of male and female, good and evil, superiority and inferiority, subject and object, self and other—also organizes the structure of African colonial, as well as 'post-colonial' societies" (Stratton, 1994, p. 15). Such binary oppositional view places African women in an inferior position and elevates their Euro-American counterparts (Nnaemeka, 2005; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994; Oyewumi, 2003).

In colonial discourses, African women are "represented as 'the inferior gender': women are passive, submissive child-like creatures that need guidance from active and courageous men" (Vadamme, 2010, p. 14). For instance, the colonial novel, *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad has been powerful in the depiction of Africa as the dark continent, and it portrays the image of the African woman as lacking of intellectual powers, lack of perseverance, sexually aberrant, irrational, and unpredictable savage and superb as well as wild-eyed and magnificent (Oyewumi, 2003; Tyagi, 2014). Stratton (1994) adds, "The voicelessness of the black woman' is a trope with a very long history, one which can be traced from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* through colonial texts like Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*" (p. 171). Colonialism using stereotypical discourses dehumanized African people in general and women in particular and relegated their cultures.

The colonial powers that conquered Africa discarded African traditional values where women had played prominent roles as men had and the socio-political structures that had perfectly managed the lives of various societies in the continent (Segueda, 2015). Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) also argues that colonialism has caused deterioration of African women's conditions at material, socio-structural, cultural and mental levels by introducing new forms of domination to African societies. Likewise, Steady (2006) underscores that in Africa, "colonialism undermined women through the introduction of male-dominated political, economic, and religious institutions that devalued the

empowering traditional institutions of women" (p. 7). The colonial powers in Africa followed the European patriarchal patterns of thought and behavior by incorporating only African males into the new political, religious and educational institutions while abolishing the traditional women's organizations that sanctioned women to take part in traditional African religious, cultural and political activities (Arndt, 2002). In pre-colonial African cultural institutions, women share roles and power with men. This is why Ogunyemi (1985) claims that "the black woman is not as powerless in the black world as the white woman is in the white world; the black woman, less protected than her white counterpart, has to grow independent" (p. 29). Even though there were patriarchal structures in pre-colonial African societies, they had lesser impact on women than that of colonially imported ones.

Stratton (1994) confirms that the pre-colonial African women enjoyed more freedom than their granddaughters whose freedom had/has been affected by colonialism and its aftermaths although some aspects of male domination had been customarily embraced by the societies the women lived in. In this respect, Steady (2006) has identified two types of patriarchy in Africa: Absolute patriarchy and limited patriarchy. Absolute patriarchy is introduced to Africa by colonialism and globalized institutions where "both African men and women are subordinated and oppressed by a global economic system that is anchored in the colonial and similar legacies" (p. 5). On the other hand, limited patriarchy emanates from national and local socio-cultural systems of African people and it is less oppressive than absolute patriarchy.

Moreover, pre-colonial African women had been feminists in both their thinking and their practical ways of life so that women's resistance to oppression has a long tradition in Africa. The assortment of social roles accessible for traditional African women led them to experiences of oppression but also allowed for agency and self-determined action that enabled them to resist the patriarchal oppression of other women who came into their own families as wives or within the class system (John, 2017; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994). Ezeigbo (2007) also contends that pre-colonial African women had strongly challenged patriarchal suppression against their rights and freedom "in their social and political organizations through the powerful political machinery of the Association of Daughters and the Association of Wives which existed in each community" (p. 150). This reveals that the pre-colonial African women were politically, socially, economically, and spiritually active to speak on behalf of a group of women in their societies.

To illustrate the above point, Arndt (2002) states that in various pre-colonial African societies like in Ashanti, Yoruba and Igbo women had played social and political leadership roles; however, with the introduction of colonialism on the continent, such power of women became diminished. For example, Igbo women had roles in traditional politics as every major king had a female equivalent regarded as his mother who had influence over him at court and supervised over his work. She was not the wife or the mother of the king but was considered the mother of her citizens. Again, Yoruba women of the Oyo Kingdom held high political ranks; for instance, a woman called Madame Tinubu was as powerful as the king of Lagos in the 1860s (Shodhganga, 2013). Ampofo et al. (2008) also claim that in the pre-colonial Hausa society, queen Amina, Queen of Zaria had inherited power from her father and by conquering adjacent regions, had sustained her power for 34 years.

Similarly, McFerson (2012) states that in traditional Sierra Leone, the socio-political structure was featured both in patriarchal and matrilineal ways. The pre-colonial Sierra Leonean women often occupied positions of power; but first the colonial experience and then post-independence patrimonial politics followed by the civil war severely diminished their political influence and participation. In like manner, Peter (1995) shows that the pre-colonial Egyptian women had leadership role gentry managing both large and small estates. For example, during the eighteenth century, Queen Ahhotep led the freedom combat against the Hyksos effectively uniting the Egyptian army with the rebellious group in Upper Egypt and was able to defend against the enemy. On the same note, Steady (2011) states that in Ghana's Asante society, there was a queen mother who had equal political role and power with the male. Equally, Matlawe (2003) states that in pre-colonial Buganda politics, there was a queen mother who had superior authority over chiefs and had exercised limitless political power by establishing her own court that was different and independent from that of the king. Briefly, women had strong influence and powerful positions in the political systems of pre-colonial Africa.

Furthermore, as Shodhganga (2013) records, in pre-colonial African cultures, women had varying degrees of economic independence. Wives and husbands in Africa have had separate incomes with clearly defined financial obligations to their children, their spouses and spouses' lineage. Married women generally had the right to own and acquire property that was separate from that of their husbands and in many areas, men and women were guaranteed equal rights to land use. Oyewumi

(2003) adds that before colonization, African women in various societies were engaged in a variety of occupations like preparing farm products or cooked food for market, raising surplus crops for sale, producing craftworks for trade. Some of the pre-colonial African women were traders, trading at home and occasionally encompassing their activities to neighboring or distant villages. Ezeigbo (2007) maintains that the pre-colonial African women had achieved extraordinary economic position and possessed valuable properties such as land so that "such women were rich and powerful and were ranked higher than men and enjoyed greater prestige and influence" (p. 154). Peter (1995) illustrates the point that in contrast to women in Western ancient civilizations that of Greece, in the pre-colonial Egyptian civilization, women were granted political and economic rights equal to Egyptian men. This means that before colonialism, African women had been granted the right to exercise prominent political and economic activities.

All the more, in some African traditions, age is taken as a foreground of wisdom, but not gender. A woman or a man is wise because she/ he is old, not necessarily because she/ he is a woman or a man (Nnaemeka, 2005). Oyewumi (2003) specifically designates that among the Yoruba, the social roles and relations between men and women were based primarily on the notion of seniority so that men and women can assume powerful positions by virtue of their age and seniority.

However, due to colonialism and its aftermath neo-colonialism, the pre-colonial privileged statuses of African women have been severely degraded into political, cultural and economic powerlessness. Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) contends that "the stereotypes which are beginning to affect the conception of women as political leaders and activists include the false assumption that women cannot stand the rigors of politics, the campaigns, the machination and the physical violence" (p. 174). Even though such assumption was not commonly known in pre-colonial African societies as women share prominent political power, it degrades women's position in post-colonial contexts. Steady (2011) underscores that "the colonial legacy had an impact on the post-colonial situation in that it established structures that are still entrenched and that marginalized traditional female authority" (p. 29). Hence, colonialism excluded African women from politics and forced them to be dependent on their husbands or fathers.

For instance, as Shodhganga (2013) indicates, with the imposition of the British administration structure in the African social context, African women lost their positions in indigenous traditions

of the continent and became subject to the Victorian patriarchal order that saw women as inferior beings. The British colonial power supported the establishment of male-dominated political and social administrative framework in Africa. For example, although the pre-colonial Nigerian Igbo politics granted equal power to male leader *Obi* and the female *Omu*, the British accepted only *Obi* by demoting the woman equivalent *Omu*. Matlawe (2003) also reveals that during the British colonial rule of Uganda, the patriarchal gender roles became effectively operated where men were entitled to hold outdoor or public activities like political, social and religious leadership while women were limited to indoor household activities under full control of men.

The colonial cultural structures that had replaced the pre-colonial African traditions distracted the very visible and dignified identity of African women by bringing alien social edicts to the continent so that "the colonial period is often described as gender-blind" (Segueda, 2015, p. 10). Steady (2011) has also noticed that "women's indigenous organizations that were sources of female power and leadership were replaced or subsumed by more Westernized women's associations with functions that tended to reinforce unequal gender roles and to integrate women into the Western capitalist system, which is built upon the subordination of women" (p. 28). The post-independence African women's social, political, economic and psychological problems have emanated from such discriminatory structures of colonialism.

What is more, post-colonial African political economies have been dependent on Western loans and grants. Thus, post-independence African nations have been compelled to sustain the colonial legacy that relegated women's role and power (Mikell, 1997). The prolongation of neo-colonial interventions in African politics through provision of war weapons, natural resource manipulation, non-governmental organizations (NGO) imposition of Western philosophies and policies, exaggerated debts and commercial practices have been still affecting the lives of African people in general and women in particular (Kolawole, 2004; Nnaemeka, 2003).

Globalization has also been serving as a systematic tool of neo-colonialism. This is because many post-colonial African economic policies invite global or multinational businesses organizations and their enormous unions as well as financial institutions such as the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, and the IMF that command the social and economic policies of many African countries (Ngugi, 1993; Steady, 2006; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994). Steady (2006) explains, "Corporate globalization is the unfettered flow of transnational capital to accumulate wealth for a

few industrialized nations and multinational corporations, by dominating women and collective action in Africa and destroying the economies of weak nations, particularly those in Africa" (pp. 12-13). Hence, African societies have been unable to progress since their political systems and structures, farming, trade relations across the continent, indigenous healthcare and philosophical outlook have been replaced by neo-colonizers' ones (Nnaemeka, 2003).

As a result, African women activists consider underdevelopment as a historical and international process of economic manipulation of nations of Africa through neo-colonialism that has strong connection with the experiences of the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, colonialism, and structural racism that endures to be articulated in corporate globalization (Steady, 2006). Nnaemeka (2003) also maintains, "From colonialism to development and globalization, the West has mounted persistent (and sometimes wrongheaded) insurgencies against the "weird regimes" that make up the "unacceptable" cultures in many parts of the so-called third world" (p. 371). To that effect, many African countries are in a prolonged state of economic crisis, resulting in political and social instability so that African women have been the most victims of such problems.

In summary, even though patriarchal suppression of women had existed and still exists elsewhere around the world, the pre-colonial African tradition had a relatively democratic structure in which women had been playing equivalent roles with men. However, colonialism dismantled such women friendly traditions and introduced new and strict patriarchal structure in which African women had and have been compelled to drop their pre-colonial privileged positions and instead to live under multiple subjugations. Post-colonial African women's agony also emanates from the continuation of the colonial suppressive legacy through neo-colonialism and globalization where those developed nations or former colonizers come back to Africa through back doors to control economic and political policies and activities of African nations. Therefore, unless full decolonization is achieved, African women and ordinary people by extension will certainly continue suffering.

2.6 Women and Un-African Religions

Christianity and Islam are considered as non-African religions, and they have been criticized for reinforcing African women's burden (Arndt, 2002; Okome, 2003; Stratton, 1994). This is because teaching mechanisms of Christianity and Islam have been designed against African traditions, and

they regard African people and their cultures as primeval, rearward and valueless. Since the introduction of Christianity and Islam, African socio-cultural structures that had esteemed women have been re-ordered according to values of these religions in the manner that degrade women's positions at both family and society levels (Segueda, 2015). Ohaeto (2015) also posits that in Africa, the patriarchal "dehumanizing and demeaning practices are perpetuated and reinforced in Christianity and Islamic practices in the guise of morality" (p. 59). Both Bible and Quran relegate women and command them to submit themselves to fathers or husbands.

Besides, both Christianity and Islam regard women as unclean (in the case of menstruation) so that they marginalize women in religious services. "When Islam and Christianity reached Africa, people started stigmatizing women because of their menstruation" (Segueda, 2015, p. 9). Consequently, African women lost their pre-Christian or pre-Islam positions in which they relatively enjoyed equality with men since most indigenous religions or beliefs of African people in which women experience much lesser subordination were forsaken due to the emergence of Christianity and Islam in Africa (Otiono, 2014; Ohaeto, 2015; Segueda , 2015).

Specifically, Christianity considers women as subordinate to men and grants men the right to control female sexuality. The Christian teaching of Eve's alleged creation from Adam's rib has made women occupy a subordinate position in the Church as well as in the family (Kambarami, 2006) because "Christian teaching pictured men as providers and decision makers, while women had roles only within the family, thus undercutting women's status in society" (Shodhganga, 2013, p. 65). Hence, the missionary established sociological rules and norms in accordance with the Christian doctrine in a way typically construe women as inferior by nature and command them to be submissive to men.

Concurrently, Stratton (1994) contends that "the introduction of Islam also disrupted traditional societies, creating new oppressed and subjugated status and roles for women" (p. 15). In African Muslim societies, women have very few rights, and husbands and fathers have basically unquestionable control over women's bodies, children, and finances. The reality of the majority of the women in African Muslim societies have been governed by the religion and their lives and experiences are shaped by the doctrines of Sharia (Adamu, 2006).

In conclusion, in this chapter, issues related with identifying problems or research gaps have been reviewed. Reviews made on sample studies and critical views on the selected novels show that contemporary African novels in English (published after 2000) have not received comprehensive and comparative critical attention from African feminist perspective. Moreover, discussions on patriarchy, post-colonial failure, colonialism or neo-colonialism and women and un-African religions reveal that contemporary African women have been suffering from multiple oppressions, and hence the main roots of these oppressions need to be dried at their sources in order to liberate women. Recognizing the above-discussed multiple causes of problems, Ogunyemi (1985) upholds that African women are deprived "in several ways: as blacks they, with their men, are victims of a white patriarchal culture; as women they are victimized by black men; and as black women they are also victimized on racial, sexual, and class grounds by white men" (p. 24). Consequently, African women are compelled to fight against oppressive forces that are driven towards them from both internal and external directions.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents the theoretical framework of this dissertation. African feminism is chosen as the theoretical framework upon which the analytical task of this dissertation dwells. The reason for choosing African feminism is that since the present research analyzes African novels from gender perspectives, African feminist theory is understood to be a suitable critical framework. Africa is home for diversified societies with varied traditional cultural values, which are reflected in novels selected from eight countries in five parts of the continent. Thus, African feminism as part of post-colonial feminisms deals with multiple issues and identities of women so that it serves this study. Besides, African feminist literary theory is very recent and comprises indigenous models that are fully based on African philosophies and traditional cultures to deal with complex and multifaceted dimensions of women's oppression within any given society in Africa. Henceforth, syntheses of the existing African feminist models that are discussed at the end of this chapter serve as the analytical basis of the novels selected in this research. Because this study focuses on feminist literary criticism, feminist literary theory has been discussed with bird's eye view, and followed by discussion on post-colonial feminism(s) since African feminism is one category of post-colonial feminism(s). Then, discussions on African feminism and its models are provided respectively.

3.1 Feminism

Feminism takes concepts from other theories, and hence it exhibits varied perspectives and viewpoints in dealing with issues of women; therefore, it is a dynamic and broad theoretical movement (Berten, 2001; Freedman, 2001). It aims at freeing women from patriarchal oppression and creating equal platform in which women acquire positive images and display their potential by fighting against patriarchy and sex-based discrimination in all activities of human beings (Plain & Sellers, 2007). In challenging male superiority and women's subjugation, feminist theory has been raising many crucial questions related to biology, psychology, society, culture, and prominent political and economic ideologies as well as in literary productions and interpretations (Bertens, 2001; Tyson, 2006). Like its concept, the historical development of feminism has been controversial among scholars in the field. Nevertheless, most agree that the political origin of feminism can be traced back to *The French Revolution* (1789). This event raised legal equality, freedom, and political rights as its central objectives but soon came the great contradiction that

marked the struggle of early feminism: freedoms, rights and legal equality that had been great conquests of the liberal revolutions didn´t affect women (Martha, 2015). However, feminism appeared in the 1960s as a self-conscious movement and full-fledged theory (Tyson, 2006).

When we see feminism interims of wave, it can be classified into three waves. First-wave feminism was a period of feminist activity and thought that occurred within the period of the 19th and early 20th century throughout the world. It focused on legal issues, primarily on going women's suffrage (the right to vote) (Martha, 2015). First wave feminism was much more concerned with material differences. It is concerned with the state in asserting legal, educational and economic equal rights for women. In this regard, Virginia Woolf was a prominent figure in demanding women's financial independence through their employment and domestic parity with men (Humm, 1992). First wave feminism can be regarded as liberal feminism that focuses on individual empowerment for equality and claims that more opportunities need to be opened to women (Plain & Sellers, 2007; Tyson, 2006).

The second wave began in the 1960s and continued into the 1990s and mostly considered as radical feminism (Martha, 2015; Plain & Sellers, 2007). The second wave was progressively theoretical, based on a synthesis of neo-Marxism and psychoanalytical theory, and began to associate the subjugation of women with broader critiques of patriarchy, capitalism, normative heterosexuality, and the woman's role as wife and mother. Second wave has strong relations with radical feminism, which argues that patriarchy and sexism are the fundamental elements that intensify women's coercion. Sex and gender were differentiated, the former being biological, and the latter a social construct that varies from culture-to-culture and over time. The first wave of feminism was generally driven by middle class, Western, white women; however, the second phase drew in non-white women and developing nations, looking for sisterhood and solidarity, demanding women's struggle to be class struggle (Humm, 1992; Martha, 2015).

The third wave of feminism began in the 1990s by Rebecca Walker , with the publication of her article entitled *Becoming the Third Wave* (1992). Third wave feminism is related to post-colonial and post-modern thinking. It focuses on queer and non-white women. In this phase, many constructs were undermined, including the notions of universal womanhood, body, gender, sexuality and hetero-normativity. The third wave feminism rejects communal and standardized objectives. Thus, it does

not recognize a collective movement and does not define itself as a group with common problems (Humm, 1992; Martha, 2015).

3.2 Post-colonial Feminism(s)

Post-colonial literary theory deals with the discourses of the Third World people within the geopolitical divisions of east and west, north and south, and it presents "critical revisions around issues of cultural difference, social authority, and political discrimination in order to reveal the antagonistic and ambivalent moments within the 'rationalizations' of modernity" (Bertens, 2001, p. 200). The long lasting effect of colonialism on ex-colonies and the issue of post- colonial problems as well as the Eurocentric universal view that suppresses literatures from colonized nations brought the birth of post-colonial theory and criticism (Melakneh, 2012; Tyson, 2006). Post-colonial literary theory deals with very broad topics and problems resulted from the first contact of colonizers and the colonized to the present stage of neo-colonialism (Melakneh, 2008).

Post-colonial feminisms are extensions of post-colonial theory that seek to emphasize women's issues in circumstances of the formerly colonized nations and embrace African feminism, Black feminism (African-American feminism), South Asian feminism and Caribbean feminism. These post-colonial feminist variants were initiated in the 1980s as a critique of both post-colonial theorists and Western feminist theorists (Ashcroft et al., 2007). Thus, it seems relevant to discuss here some critical issues of post-colonial feminisms on both post-colonial theory and Western feminist theory.

To begin with, the inability of post-colonial theorists to treat post-colonial women's experiences distinctively has been one of the reasons to develop post-colonial feminisms. Post-colonial theory marginalizes issues of women while it gives due attention to racial and other post-colonial issues (Chigwedere, 2015). Bertens (2001) acknowledges an Indian theorist and critic, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak to be the first post-colonial theorist with complete feminist issues in her famous essay, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988). Spivak insists that categorizations based on class make difference imperceptible so that post-colonial theorists should recognize that the colonized subaltern subject is inevitably heterogeneous. Among the varied categories of the colonized, the female subaltern has been doubly marginalized. Hence, Spivak calls for due attention for the female subaltern in post-colonial societies (Ashcroft et al., 2007).

This is because the prominent post-colonial theorists such as Edward Said and Homi Bhabha fundamentally overlooked the question of post-colonial women's differences. Said's influential work *Orientalism,* in its discussion of Western depictions of the East has unheeded gender issues. Similarly, Bhabha's work on the ambivalence of colonial discourses also explores the relationship between a colonizing subject and a colonized object without reference to how specifics of gender might complicate his model (Ashcroft et al., 2007; Bertens, 2001). Therefore, Bhabha also neglects women's issues in his theory of the interactions between colonizers and colonized people.

Tyagi (2014) also records that Mahatma Gandhi's specific representation of women was legitimately embodied only in marriage, wifehood, domesticity and all forms of controlling women's bodies. Accordingly, Indian nationalism attempted at controlling female bodies by imprisoning them into stereotypes. Moreover, Caribbean male writers, such as Edourd Glissant and Joseph Zobel have also been accused of portraying lifeless, distorted, or stereotypical representations of women. Although Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) has accredited an important role women played in Algerian revolutionary struggle, his writing on the colonized mentality appears covertly to be masculine. Fanon neglected significant raced-gendered psycho-political aspects that silhouette men's experiences, and in turn worsen the negative effects of war and postwar reconstruction on African women (Aaronette, 2007).

The second reason that has caused the birth of post-colonial feminisms is the failure of Western feminism to deal with the experiences of the women in the formerly colonized nations. In the 1980s, several feminist critics such as (Carby, Mohanty, Spivak, and Suleri) chose to "argue that Western feminism, which had assumed that gender overrode cultural differences to create a universal category of the womanly or the feminine, was operating from hidden, universalist assumptions with a middle-class, Euro-centric bias" (Ashcroft et al., 2007, p. 94). Oyewumi (2003) maintains that as Western feminism illuminates European worldview, the socio-political organizations and processes flow from it with the declaration of the universal subordination of women in the early 1970s, and thus post-colonial feminisms criticize Western forms of feminism for their universalization of female experiences neglecting multiple and diversified sources of inequalities around the world.

Western feminism defines women as a universal group without reference to region, nation, race, cultural boundaries, or even history. While White liberal feminism has been criticized for failing to consider specific burdens and their main causes on post-colonial women of third world, Western radical and Marxist feminisms are accused of their claim to discourse in the name of every woman with the assumption of universalizing women subjugations (Arndt, 2002). Western feminists do not refer to the history of slavery, imperialism, colonization, and racial domination of non-Western peoples (Ashcroft et al., 2007; Bertens, 2001). Consequently, post-colonial feminisms focus on a mechanism in which racism and the long-lasting political, economic, and cultural consequences of colonialism and neo-colonialism distract non-white, non-Western women in the post-colonial world.

Besides, Western feminists' "categorization of women as a homogeneous group, always constituted as powerless and victimized, does not reflect the fact that gender relations are social relations and therefore historically grounded and culturally bound" (Oyewumi, 2003, p. 40). Post-colonial feminists contend that oppression relating to the colonial experience, particularly racial, class, and ethnic based oppression has marginalized women in post-colonial societies. As Nnaemeka (2003) scornfully states, "Arrogating to themselves the moral responsibility to intervene to rescue women victims from the "weird regimes," Western feminists have brought to the fore intense debates about the conception of good, social justice, and moral responsibility from which, unfortunately, the humanity of those to be rescued is relegated to the background" (p. 371). As a result, post-colonial feminists attack negative representations of non-Western women as passive and voiceless victims and depiction of Western women as modern, educated and empowered by developing and establishing their own distinctive brands of feminism in ways that decolonize the Western colonial/neo-colonial legacy based feminism.

In sum, post-colonial feminisms arise to incorporate gender issues in post-colonial theory and to correct the distortion of post-colonial non-white non-Western women in the dominant Western mainstream feminism. As colonialism and patriarchy have been meticulously matted, the withdrawal of colonial power does not bring emancipation to post-colonial women in the former colonies. Thus, the colonized women in the post-independence context continue to be stereotyped and marginalized even unluckily by post-colonial theorists who aim to end cultural oppression and other negative effects of colonialism. To this end, post-colonial feminists question the positions

and distinctive experiences of colonized women both in theorizing of post-colonialism and Western feminism. Focusing of specific and distinctive social, cultural, economic, historical, psychological issues of post-colonial women in various developing countries of the world, post-colonial feminisms struggle to end multi-dimensional oppressive thoughts and practices against women and their respective societies. Each strand of post-colonial feminisms bases its philosophies and methodologies in its particular societies' cultures and worldviews.

3.3 African Feminist Theory

As part of post-colonial feminisms, African feminist theory came into being because of the incapability of both post-colonial theory and Western feminism to entertain post-colonial African women's issues in their respective discourses. The former almost ignored the contribution of African women in ant-colonial struggle as well in overall socio-cultural, economic and political development of the continent being prejudiced by patriarchal ideology while the latter distorted African women's identity and experiences being influenced by colonial/ neo-colonial ideology. Many African feminists argue that they did not learn the concept of women's struggle for self-assertion from Western feminists; and thus, the history of African women's battle for freedom goes beyond Western feminism (Ampofo et al., 2008; Arndt, 2002; Nnaemeka, 2003). Despite the fact that the Western notion of feminism has no equivalent expression in African languages, the practice of collective struggle against oppressive forces and thoughts had/have been carried out by women in all aspects of their respective societies (Jacobs, 2011; Nnaemeka, 2003).

However, Okome (2003) argues that in exactly the same way as colonial missionaries defined African families as pagans before forcing them to become Christian, Western feminists desire to disgrace African people and their culture under the mask of freeing women. Western feminist discourses on African women are characterized by their subjugation of African women that stereotypically universalize all African women as submissive and victims of patriarchy and indigenous traditions. Therefore, African feminism deconstructs "the celebrated image of African women as passive victims, marginalized without a voice as presented in some feminist critiques, traditional ideologies, male-streaming and mainstreaming strategies of gender intervention that are exclusive and essentialist, treating African women or the category of gender as monoliths" (Kolawole, 2004, p. 253). By empowering indigenous resistance mechanisms that are based on

African cultural and philosophical ground, African feminism strives to eradicate oppressive practices and ideologies that emanate from both patriarchy and colonialism/neo-colonialism.

Among various collaborative strategies of pre-colonial African women, which had been implemented in traditional African societies, negotiation and cooperation, motherhood, family centeredness and kinship solidarity are prominent ones that African feminism seeks to restore. Thereby, "African feminism is part and parcel of African women's lived experiences and about African indigenous ways of knowing…it is about decolonization" (Gatwiri & McLaren, 2016, p. 266). African feminism critically investigates political, social, cultural and economic relationships of inequality and oppression and believes that the post-independence African snags are the residual effects of the traumatic colonization where African women's victimization and suppression become deepened (Nnaemeka, 2003; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994).

Coetzee (2017) underpins that "in African nationalist rhetoric the attempts to transform gender relations in African societies are often framed as neo-colonial and 'un-African' and therefore pitted against sub-Saharan African cultural and traditional identities", and hence it is "the continued neo-colonial imposition of Western values onto African societies" (p. 8). African feminism battles against Western based feminist programs in post-colonial African nationalist rhetoric because such programs are against African cultural and traditional identities as they are set in neo-colonial ways. Instead, African feminists propose empowering indigenous feminist mechanisms that had been practiced by pre-colonial African women.

African feminism urges that African countries need to create social, economic, political and cultural institutions that are independent of foreign influences and establish harmonized and cooperative workforces that equally and equitably embrace men and women. African governments and societies need to focus on building humanized and indigenous development processes so that it is possible to attain the true result of development (Nnaemeka, 2003; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994; Stratton, 1994; Steady, 2011). For African women, development relates to their economic and political liberation that embraces empowerment of their human capital, and their social, cultural, and personal well-being through indigenous philosophies and methodologies that the pre-colonial society had employed as well as enabling complete decolonization (Steady, 2006). By recognizing these assumptions, African feminists developed a variety of African indigenous models as presented below.

3.3.1 Models of African Feminism

Although the practice of feminism has been taking place in Africa since pre-colonial era, African gender scholarship has brought distinctive perspectives to African feminist theorizing and teaching in the late 20th century. Since "the African female thinker, more than her Western counterpart, is doubly suppressed by hostile forces first, by her male counterparts and second, by the European neo-colonialists by which feminism is subsumed" (Alkali et al., 2013, p. 239), African feminists have recognized the impossibility of treating African gender issues based on the Western monolithic feminism. As a result, focusing on multi-faceted problems of African women, since the second half of the 1980s, African gender studies have brought many indigenous scholars, and hence there has been growth in the construction of feminist knowledge by African scholars for African people in general and women in particular (Ampofo et al., 2008).

While refuting Western feminism, African feminists endeavor to name their own feminism because "self-naming has become a very important aspect of black women's self-recreation" (Kolawole, 2004, p. 260). Thus, various indigenous African feminist approaches have emerged in chronological order: African Womanism by Chikwenye Ogunyemi (1985); Stiwanism by Molara Ogundipe-Leslie (1994); Motherism by Catherine Acholonu (1995), Nego-feminism by Obioma Nnaemeka (1999) (Alkali et al., 2013; Arndt, 2002; Simon & Obeten, 2013; Sotunsa, 2009).

Alkali et al. (2013) state that although many African gender scholars agree on most principles of African feminism, there has been debate among them in relation to naming and points of emphasis. Besides, there has not been agreement among scholars whether the above-mentioned variants of African feminism are distinctively models or theories. Similarly, it is difficult to draw borders among them in relation to ideologies and basic issues each considers in dealing with African women's matters. Yet, I argue that they can be taken as models of African feminism because slight differences are recognized in their respective priorities and principles. In line with this, first, I discuss the above-listed models distinctly and then conclude by identifying their differences and shared principles upon the latter the analytic framework of this dissertation dwells.

3.3.1.1 Womanism

According to Phillips (2006), a Black American feminist, Alice Walker, in her book: *In search of Our Mothers Gardens: Womanist Prose (*1983) has first coined the term *Womanism*. Walker's womanism has strong connection with Black feminism in a way that it primarily sets a dividing boundary between Black feminism and Western feminism. Walker's womanism is a wide-ranging theoretical model under which feminism is subsumed as a subcategory. Womanism's principal focus is not on patriarchal injustices rather on race and class related dominances, and therefore it fights for the subsistence of all people despite sexual difference (Jacobs, 2011). In support of this view, Arndt (2002) states, "Walker implies that womanists are concerned with overcoming not only sexist discrimination, but also discrimination based on people's racial or socio-economic identity" (p. 32). Walker's womanism also recognizes the experience of black women, black culture, black myths, black spiritual life and orality embracing homosexual love affair (Arndt, 2002; Phillips, 2006).

Another African-American scholar, Clenora Hudson-Weems, has also invented *Africana Womanism* in her book, *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves* (1993). Africana womanism "is grounded in African culture, and therefore, it necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs, and desires of Africana women" (Hudson-Weems, 1993, p. 48). Unlike Western feminism that considers racial and class based oppression of women as secondary and takes sexual based domination as primary and universal, Africana womanism highlights subordinations that are based on race and class rather than patriarchal suppressions arguing that sexism is derived from racism, classism, and economic prejudices (Jacobs, 2011; Phillips, 2006). Accordingly, Africana women have been victimized first and foremost because they are black, and they have been further victimized because they are women living in a male-dominated society. Hudson-Weems rejects feminism because it is philosophically rooted in Eurocentric ideals, and it does not match with experiences of Africana women; that is to say women of the African diaspora. She further asserts that it is impossible to incorporate the cultural perspectives of Africana women into Western white feminist theory due to the history of slavery and racism in America. Africana womanism differs from Walker's one for its rejection of homosexuality (Hudson-Weems, 1993).

Moreover, the Nigerian literary critic, Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi, in her essay *Womanism: The Dynamics of the Contemporary Black Female Novel in English*" (1985) has coined another

version *African Womanism*. In Ogunyemi's view, womanism is a more authentic term expressing the African females' experiences. She claims that "where a white woman writer may be a feminist, a black woman writer is likely to be a "womanist."... Along with her consciousness of sexual issues, she must incorporate racial, cultural, national, economic, and political considerations into her philosophy" (1985, p. 21). Hence, African womanism considers wider and multiple roots of women's subordination unlike Western feminism that gives entire emphasis to sexual matters. African-American and African womanisms have similarities because both groups fight against racism, sexism and classicism. Besides, both criticize Western white feminism for denying attention to black women and their communities at large (Arndt, 2002).

However, Ogunyemi's African womanism has been differentiated from both white feminism and African-American womanism as a peculiar model to deal with issues of African woman (Jacobs, 2011). African-American womanism demands only black women to be devoted to the continued existence and unity of the entire people, male and female. On the other hand, African womanism requires well-adjusted commitment between men and women as the following definition implies.

> Womanism is a philosophy that celebrates black roots, the ideals of black life, while giving a balanced presentation of black womandom. It concerns itself as much with the black sexual power tussle as with the world power structure that subjugates blacks. Its ideal is for black unity where every black person has a modicum of power and so can be a "brother" or a "sister" or a "father" or a "mother" to the other...its aim is the dynamism of wholeness and self-healing (Ogunyemi, 1985, p. 28).

African womanism calls for cooperative and concerted harmony of men and women to fight against the "impact of racism, neo-colonialism, nationalism, economic instability, and psychological disorientation on black lives, when superimposed on the awareness of sexism that characterizes black women's writing, makes concern about sexism merely one aspect of womanism" (Ogunyemi, 1985, p. 28). Battling for abolition of gender oppression in the African context cannot be successful without comprehensive struggle that equally considers class, race, poverty and other ways of suppression (Kolawole, 2004; Ogunyemi, 1985). Nonetheless, African-American womanists (Walker and Hudson-Weems) focus on race-class-gender factors only while African womanism goes beyond race-class-gender metamorphosis. African-American womanisms emphasize racial and class based segregations and suppressions along with sexism in their

endeavor to establish distinctive gender theory in ways that recognize and relate with the history of black discrimination and domination in America has been originated from slavery, which underlies the experiences of African-American women (Arndt, 2002; Ogunyemi, 1885). Similar to Western feminism, African-American womanisms which fundamentally deal with the African-American women's experiences, fail to recognize uniqueness of African reality that results from post-colonial economic, political, social and cultural development failure. Ogunyemi in an interview with Arndt (2000) maintains that:

> We cannot take the African-American situation and its own peculiarities and impose it on Africa, particularly as Africa is so big and culturally diverse. When I was thinking about womanism, I was thinking about those areas that are relevant for Africans but not for blacks in America-issues like extreme poverty and in-law problems, older women oppressing younger women, women oppressing their co-wives, or men oppressing their wives (p. 714).

African womanism examines various forms of suppressions and subjugations along with race based problems in establishing its theoretical model that entirely depends on African cultural traditions and philosophical outlooks. Yunusy (2015) states that in African womanism "Ogunyemi foregrounds issues of corruption, greed, power mongering, civil war, military aggression as central aspects to any Nigerian theorizing about Africa in general and African women in particular" (p. 10). Hence, African womanism is an inclusive and broad based model that discourses the multiplicity of women's suppression through variety of viewpoints. Another departure of African womanism from African-American counterpart is that the former values African women's role as childbearing. African women have a limitless desire to bear children and they consider such a role as a blessing rather than burden that keeps them to do only household duties (Arndt, 2002).

Moreover, some Black American womanists have grossly misunderstood the concept of African cultural practices such as polygamy and bride price. While African-American womanists consider polygamy as patriarchal exploitation of women, African womanists consider it as a means of resistance to oppression because it lessens women's household chores and helps to bring additional workforce to the family since many African peoples' livelihood is based on traditional agriculture (Oyewumi, 2003, Sotunsa, 2009). African-American womanism also regards paying bride price as 'buying' the bride whereas, bride-price in many African cultures is actually meant as

a symbol of the value of women, or husbands who pay bride-price are supposed to consider it as a sign of love for their wives (Ogunyemi, 1985; Sotunsa, 2009).

Furthermore, Walker's womanism confirms acceptance of homosexuality in African-American feminist discourses, but homosexuality is regarded as immoral and alien to African womanists. African womanism believes that heterosexual marriage and family structure are central to the African female experience while lesbianism is a strange concept and never exists in African worldviews (Phillips, 2006; Ogunyemi, 1985). Kolawole (2004) posits that the main principle of womanism relies on mutual cooperation and conciliation between men and women where cultural values, motherhood and family relations are dignified and thought to be mechanisms of eliminating all forms of subjugations and coercions. Even so, some critics have criticized womanism for it concentrates on the black race. As Western feminism failed for not incorporating experiences and conditions of post-colonial non-white women, African womanism has no concern for white women or non-black women (Alkali et al., 2013).

African womanism "is necessitated by African women's inclusive, mother-centered ideology, with its focus on caring – familial, communal, national, and international" (Ogunyemi, 1996 quoted in Yunusy, 2015, p. 10). Motherhood is an eminent construct encircling a number of meanings not generally recognized in Western and African-American cultures. Motherhood as African womanist method of social transformation has its roots in African cultural legacies, and it is a set of manners that comprises leadership, all forms of nurturing, being symbol and model, guidance and adjustment of behaviors, spirituality, and dispute resolution (Phillips, 2006). In many African family systems, unlike in the Western nuclear family, motherhood is the most important source and mode of solidarity and being a mother is perceived as an inherent feature of womanhood. As a result, African women take their reproductive tasks seriously and celebrate their ability to give birth, and refuse to subordinate their biological roles to other roles within their societies (Ogunyemi, 1985).

In addition, African womanist model considers family centeredness as basic principle. Ogunyemi (1985) views the concept of family differently from Western views as she states, "Concern for the family-not for the Western nuclear family (as viewed by feminists) but for the black extended family (as viewed by womanists) with its large numbers and geographical spread" (p. 29). Family centeredness emphasizes the commitment to family and community as a whole that is of foremost

importance to African women for it encourages the achievement of the group and collective outcomes. African womanism recognizes extended family relation as a core sustenance ground where African women often get recognition and acclaim when their marriages fail (Simon & Obeten, 2013). In contrast, "the identities of many white middle-class feminists are framed by their liberation from the family and domesticity, and, consequently, Western feminists frequently express impatience with what they perceive as the collaboration of third world women in their own oppression" (Jacobs, 2011, p. 26). Nonetheless, African womanism maintains a sense of wholeness embracing the entire family unit with kinship solidarity and valuing the necessity of emancipating African women from oppression and enabling them to be strong for not only themselves, but also for their family and community as a whole (Orjinta, 2013; Phillips, 2006).

The relationship between a black man and a black woman is significantly different from the relationship between a white man and a white woman, and because the white woman battles the white man for subjugating her, but the black woman battles all oppressive forces that subjugate her, her children and the black man (Alkali et al., 2013). This concern makes womanism an all-inclusive model that endeavors for the emancipation and safety of women including the entire African people on the continent and those who reside in the Diaspora regardless of sexual difference (Orjinta, 2013). Nonetheless, African womanism needs mutually respectful amalgamation between women and men where men are seriously expected to transform their patriarchal attitude towards women (Kolawole, 2004). Hence, marriage or wifehood is taken as part of motherhood so long as it does not oppress women as African womanism questions the patriarchal notion of motherhood.

African womanism also highly celebrates women's economic independence and heartens women to be on their own, and not to be dependent on men or society (Ogunyemi, 1985). Kolawole (2004) adds, "African women exalt femininity and recognize the need to separate gender space when necessary. African women can use their existing, often uncharted power base and build on it instead of trying to be like men" (p. 262). Therefore, African womanism aims to create a self-possessed conscious woman who protects her autonomy by systematically involving her male compatriot in her struggle while obeying the ideals of compromise and reconciliation. Instead of aggressive battling, Ogunyemi (1985) recommends systematic ways in which "bad men are eliminated so that men and women can live together harmoniously" (p. 31). When tension,

disagreement, or conflict arises, Ogunyemi's notion of compromise and reconciliation uses the methods of arbitration and mediation (Phillips, 2006).

Spirituality is also taken as an important method or principle in African womanism. Based on varieties of African traditional cultures, African womanism employs techniques of indigenous spirituality such as making ritual ceremonies, various prayer methods, optimistic forecasting and healing practices in order to gain spiritual energy towards social, political, and physical problem resolving. Besides, the spiritual method of social transformation has been claimed to be important in sustaining harmonious relationship between humans and the environment (Phillips, 2006). While striving to restore the indigenous spirituality, Ogunyemi condemns "the foreign religion of Islam has, like Christianity, been ruthlessly imposed on Africans. Both religions bear partial responsibility for the fact that many Africans have suffered psychological and moral disorientation" (1985, p. 31). Thereby, African womanism regards these un-African religions as one of the obstacles of African women and their respective society's freedom. Because the present study deals with African novels, it takes some of the notable shared principles of African womanism (Ogunyemi's model) with other models of African feminism that are also discussed in subsequent parts of this chapter.

3.3.1.2 Stiwanism

Stiwanism is another variant or model of African feminism that has been introduced by Ogundipe-Leslie in her book *Re-creating Ourselves: African Women and Critical Transformations* (1994). Ogundipe-Leslie states that stiwanism is derived from "STIWA is my acronym for Social Transformation Including Women in Africa…to discuss the needs of African women today in the tradition of the spaces and strategies provided in our indigenous cultures for the social being of women" (1994, pp. 229- 230). Thus, stiwanism principally concentrates on the capabilities and veracities of African women by eliminating African-American women.

Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) identifies six obstacles that hinder African woman's freedom. The first one is oppression resulting from colonialism and neo-colonialism that has been structured in various institutions of the continent and has been exploiting African women's humanity and resources. The second is women subordination as a result of traditional structures in the form of feudalism, servitude, and the like which had/have been rooted in internal features of suppression.

The third is women's backwardness that emanates from women's lack of education that should help them acquire scientific knowledge and skill through which they escape poverty, ignorance, and other causes of coercions. The fourth is man that is, being influenced by patriarchal ideology; many African men suppress women and consider them as subordinate beings. The fifth is her color and race; this has strong relation with colonialism since racism has been one of the products of colonial injustices. The sixth is herself; that is, woman against woman. Some women who internalize patriarchal ideology support and maintain women suppressive thoughts and practices instead of helping women to get out of oppressions (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994).

In addition to the above six obstacles, stiwanism considers imported religions like Christianity and Islam as hindrances to African women's freedom (Arndt, 2002; Stratton, 1994). The colonial Christianity that brought nineteenth century European ideas of patriarchy has been degrading African women's status (Okome, 2003). Therefore, social realities of African women are molded by different systems and practices of domination from internal and external dimensions. Similar with Ogunyemi's African womanism, Ogundipe-Leslie's stiwanism is a multi-dimensional framework for understanding women's oppression, critical transformations and redemptive practices that take place at both structural levels and in people's minds (Arndt, 2002; John, 2017).

Stiwanists critically scrutinize structural features that oppress women and the way women encounter institutionalized systems in a way that the battle of African women considers how they have internalized patriarchy and have come to approve the structure themselves (Alkali et al., 2013). As a result, "Ogundipe's focus relies primarily on the investigation of social relationships of inequality and oppression and offers only a delineation of what it can mean for African women to recreate themselves" (John, 2017, p. 89). In other words, Ogundipe-Leslie's stiwanism identifies multiple structural levels of oppressive practices and ideologies so that it can get the right path to transform the society's mind in which to accommodate and reverence women's positive role and equality. By this means, stiwanism, by distinguishing analytical perspective on multiple axes of inequality and differences, endeavors to dry the main roots of oppression.

Ogundipe-Leslie's theoretical stand revolves around the crucial role of gender issues in all social transformation endeavors of African nations with the assumption that "there can be no liberation of African society without the liberation of African women" (1994, p. 209). Hence, stiwanism endeavors to reform social and family structures in order to establish an equitable platform where

women get access to reveal their potential and skill in the transformation processes of the continent. Ogundipe-Leslie further argues, “With modernization of Africa...there has to be a new re-ordering of society, particularly at the level of family because of erosions and changes within the indigenous family stemming from new developments which has to be interrogated” (1994, p. 210). As a result, stiwanism claims that the post-colonial transformation policies and models of African nations need to be restructured in a way that includes women and their issues considering the relevance of restoring the pre-colonial indigenous family harmony that was lost because of colonial hegemony.

Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) postulates that since many African women highly celebrate motherhood, African feminism should not depart from women’s biological role of childbearing. Empowering motherhood and family centered struggle play crucial role to bring social transformation. Development endeavors should stress on the needs of African women and their respective societies today in the spaces and strategies provided in indigenous traditional African cultures. Development problems of post-independence Africa can be properly solved when the transformation philosophy and methodologies are based on indigenous traditions and knowledge in a way that actively involve women in all aspects. Because in many traditional African cultures, women have been proved as creative agents of development and peace for the social being of women and their communities (John, 2017). Supporting this point, one of the notable Kenyan female novelists, Margaret Ogola (1995) contends that African women are brilliant and capable in all forms as follows.

> A woman is a powerhouse of creativity, development and peace. Conflict between men and women is therefore unnecessary because a woman brings an equal and powerful complementarity to the common human condition. Women have been entrusted with the capacity to transmit life, which is the most precious gift that anybody can give or receive. Without life, no other good is possible (quoted in Cathryne, 2015, p. 4).

This implies that African women are wise and systematic in resolving snags. Thus, in order to create a well-developed continent, African governments, and societies should encourage women to participate in the development and transformation activities of the continent instead of relying on the Western neo-colonizers philosophy and methodology. African women’s lived experience as

mothers who are naturally responsible to sustain the transmission of life help them to properly understand the necessity to establish mutually deferential and concerted relationship between women and men. This experience plays a crucial part in social transformation so that women should be given opportunity to participate in every development endeavors of their respective nation. Stiwanists struggle to increase women's participation in shaping African destiny.

To that effect, “women should be encouraged and supported to get into the executive positions of parties, into the decision making bodies of the community organizations and go for candidacies” (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994, p. 174). Stiwanists also urge women to be educated by themselves and get awareness about their rights and responsibilities at family, societal and national levels. They should also be economically independent and contribute their financial share to their respective families. This is because stiwanism has noted that patriarchal gender role has not been totally oppressive to women since the financial source of a family largely relies on man. Ogundipe-Leslie underlines the necessity to revisit gender roles:

> African women have to re-examine those gender roles and not to be opportunistic about them. African women sometimes accept those male gender roles which soften life for women. They must cease to want to exploit men financially or to burden the men within the family while talking about equality (1994, p. 210).

The above citation states that women should be committed to change the patriarchal way of task differentiation between men and women in order to claim their equality with men. It is not logical to blame men for dominating while waiting for their hand and being economically dependent on them. Stiwanism understands that the radical or militant resistance mechanism of Western feminism has no place in African context. Thus, it emphasizes men-women cooperation with the belief that African women are able to realize equivalent and powerful complementarity to the common human condition. To stiwanism, lasting freedom of African women can only be gained through transforming African societies and solving all forms of problems using the technique of diplomacy, and thus it attempts to display it in order to create cooperative and harmonious society regardless of sex and other forms of discrimination. The transformation of African people is the accountability of both men and women because in African cultures, African women operate on binary complementarity of the sexes: male and female rather than binary opposites (Arndt, 2002; John, 2017; Sotunsa, 2009).

Consequently, stiwanism profoundly focuses on ways of building a harmonious society rather than arrogantly struggling with men for equality as Western radical feminism does. However, Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) claims that "African women must read white feminists but with discrimination, and with critical sensitivity to their relevance or non-relevance to the complexity and differences in our history, sociology and experiences as different peoples" (p. 208). This indicates that stiwanism does not totally ignore Western feminism; rather it seeks to adopt some sounding principles of white feminism in a way that agree with African socio-cultural realities along with refuting those thoughts that subjugate African women and their indigenous cultures.

Briefly, stiwanism posits that social transformation is the best method to end multi-dimensional oppressions of women. Nevertheless, the transformation endeavor should be first liberated from Western colonizers' or neo-colonizers' philosophy and base its philosophy and methodology on African indigenous knowledge and realistic development procedures that committedly embrace women and gratefully listen to their ideas. African men and women should have mutual beneficial, transformative, and progressive relationships in the private and public spheres in order to bring full transformation and emancipation to the continent.

3.3.1.3 Motherism

Motherism as an alternative model of African feminism is recommended by Catherine Acholonu in her book: *Motherism: An Afro-centric Alternative to Feminism* (1995). Acholonu (1995) explains that motherhood has been an inevitable source of African based philosophy so that African feminism should be grounded on it as her definition below denotes.

> An Afrocentric feminist theory, therefore, must be anchored on the matrix of *motherhood* which is central to African metaphysics and has been the basis of the survival and unity of the black race through the ages. Whatever Africa's role may be in the global perspective, it could never be divorced from her quintessential position as the Mother Continent of humanity, nor is it coincidental that motherhood has remained the central focus of African art, African literature (especially women's writing) (quoted in Orjinta, 2013, p. 69).

In the above quotation, Acholonu symbolizes African continent as a mother due to the fact that the notion of motherhood in African cultures is understood as one's ability to sustain life, nurture

society with its environment in a harmonized way and handle leadership role at family, community and national levels at large. Jacobs (2011) maintains that "Mother Africa ideal stands in contrast to the Euro-feminist view of motherhood as a condition of passivity and confinement…as a means of confining women within a patriarchally-constructed hierarchy, has been a primary self-description invoked by African women" (p. 24). Every African woman embraces motherhood as a fundamental or an intrinsic feature of womanhood so that she expresses herself in association with her status as a mother (Maerten, 2004).

The African concept of motherhood is very different from Western definition that relegates mothers' role to household activities and passive servants of husbands. "The task of the motherist is that of healing and protecting the natural cohesive essence of the family, the child, the society and the environment" (Arndt, 2002, p. 47). This entails that motherism claims for establishing strong connections with nature and emphasizes remedial and safeguarding of stability and unity of family, children, community and the environment where they live. Like the above discussed models, motherism is a multi-dimensional model that deals with issues of "racism, malnutrition, political and economic exploitation, hunger and starvation, child abuse and morality, drug addiction, proliferation of broken homes and homelessness around the world, the degradation of environment and depletion of ozone layer through pollution" (Acholonu, 1995, quoted in Sadia, 2016, p. 61). Thus, motherism works to eradicate all oppressive forces by restructuring societies and their attitudes in a positive and cooperative manner.

In this way, "Acholonu's motherism sounds in part like Ogundipe-Leslie's stiwanism. Both focus on social transformation at the personal, national and international level" (Arndt, 2002, p. 48). As stiwanists believe in the potential of women to bring social transformation, motherists also rely on the strength of African women and argue that women are mentally and physically capable of doing everything without dropping their motherly responsibility. Motherism "involves the dynamics of ordering, re-ordering, creating structures, building and rebuilding in cooperation with mother nature at all levels of human endeavor" (Ezeaku, 2014, pp. 32-33). Consequently, motherism seeks socio-cultural transformations in African societies where the pre-colonial status and roles of African motherhood or womanhood should be restored and empowered.

Motherism commends African rural women for properly handling the mission of nurturing society, and it gives special attention to "nature, nurture, and respect in the mother-child space as

the center of any motherist discourse" (Alkali et al., 2013, p. 244). Mother's love and nurturing that are not limited to children but extended to the society at large aiming at creating a peaceful and harmonious co-existence. In many indigenous cultures of Africa, motherhood is perceived as a role model and representation of leadership quality because "female leadership is indigenous to African societies and is manifested in numerous ways in both state and stateless entities" (Steady, 2011, p. 27). Unlike in Western cultures and feminist movements, a woman's motherhood identity has often been expressed in African traditions as a favored marker of collective ethnic, religious and cultural identity and is treated as a core aspect of that identity so that women's biological role is not viewed as preventing them from taking part in political and economic responsibilities (Jacobs, 2011).

In Acholonu's (1995) motherism, the armaments of feminist battling are "love, tolerance, service, and mutual cooperation of the sexes...The motherist male writer or artist does not create his work from a patriarchal, masculinist, dominatory perspective" (quoted in Orjinta, 2013, p. 69). Unlike Western radical feminists, Motherists embrace men in their fight against suppression so that similar with the above-discussed two models; motherism does not consider men as enemies. In addition, even in contrast with African- American womanists who call for only women to struggle against oppression and subjugations forwarded to black women and men, motherism claims that men should take an active part in African gender activism and in all rounded endeavors to achieve full development in the continent. Motherism is gender neutral; therefore, a man can be a motherist and thus motherism not only refers to nurturing as women's roles but as humanistic roles. Motherism also condemns the African-American womanism for embracing lesbianism. Regarding the need for establishing friendly cooperation with men, Acholonu further opines in an interview with Otiono (2014) as follows.

> We cannot train our daughters hating men. We just cannot do it. Give them the opportunity to love, let them have their own experience. Do not tell them men are distasteful or evil; do not do that. I cannot do that to my children. I want my children to know that the world is full of love, even if there is lots of hate around. The light is there and invariably, the light will overcome darkness. And if you arm your children with love, love conquers evil all the time. If you arm them with hate, you have already defeated them--you destroy them (pp. 77- 78).

The quotation underlines that hateful and militant fight against men can never release women from suppression; rather love and cooperation are best weapons to dismiss any form of subjugation and dominance. What separates motherism from womanism and stiwanism is that its relegation of patriarchal structure. This is because Acholonu's motherism argues that in pre-colonial African social structure, economic power had been the principal factor to determine one's status in a society rather than sex. However, Arndt (2002) criticizes this argument saying, "Acholonu ignores that economic power is, among others, structured by gender" (p. 50). Nevertheless, Acholonu (1995) as cited in Ardent (2002) contends that the idea of subjugating women was brought to Africa by Western and Arabian colonialisms through Christianity and Islam. In indigenous African traditions, particularly a woman's role as a mother had/ has been celebrated as the most and greatest achievement and an identification of the elevation of womanhood (Anthony & Kolawole, 2014). Yet, due to colonialism and introduction of Islam to Africa, such status of womanhood became affected even though it still maintains its privileged position in some rural parts of the continent.

Specially, motherism ponders devaluation of women as one of the main strategies of colonialism "because the colonialists knew of the strength and the influence of women, as well as the fact that African societies drew their strength and their cohesion from the mutual complementarity of the sexes, the power of women" (Arndt, 2002, p. 48). In motherist view, the existing relationship between African men and women is to be described as complementarity that "does not need to be striven for, since it is already there" (Arndt, 2002, p. 66). The complementary relationship between men and women has been a vital characteristic of African tradition and it always subsists in any African society so that the claim to restore what already exists is meaningless to motherism. This is why Acholonu blames some African feminists who give priority to gender based hierarchies in their discourses. Furthermore, like womanism and stiwanism, motherism claims that Islam and Christianity have been destroying indigenous African traditions and African foremothers' spiritual connections with their newer generation daughters since both religions ban participation in traditional rituals and associations (Arndt, 2002; Otiono, 2014).

In summary, motherism as an African gender theoretical model, distinguishes itself from both Western feminism and African-American feminism/ womanism. It rejects Western feminist notion of universalization of women's subordination by patriarchy and criticizes exclusion of family,

motherhood and children in Western feminist discourses as well as it refutes some aspects of black womanism such as homosexuality and exclusion of men from its gender discourses. Moreover, the basic principles of motherism are based on indigenous African cultural traditions, and it claims that motherhood had/has been an ideal representation of African cultural identity and symbolizes the continent. Instead of arrogant and militant fights against women's suppression and marginalization, it proposes love, tolerance and mutual cooperation as systematic and basic tools that bring better results than distancing women from men.

3.3.1.4 Nego-feminism

This is another African feminist model that is developed by Obioma Nnaemeka in her article*: Nego-Feminism: Theorizing, Practicing, and Pruning Africa's Way* (1999). Nego-feminists argue that the core of women's struggle for freedom is negotiation and compromise, which is rooted in Africa's value system. Many African cultures embrace a culture of negotiation and compromise when it comes to attainment of agreements (Nnaemeka, 2003). In similar manner that the aforementioned three models have shaped their theoretical grounds, nego-feminism also bases its principles on African realities and cultural environments as Nnaemeka further states:

> To meaningfully explain the phenomenon called African feminism, it is not to Western feminism but rather to the African environment that one must refer. African feminism is not reactive; it is proactive. It has a life of its own that is rooted in the African environment. Its uniqueness emanates from the cultural and philosophical specificity of its provenance (2003, p. 376).

In this citation, Nnaemeka has differentiated her model from Western feminism claiming that African socio-cultural situations in which women live are quite dissimilar with that of Europe or America. Therefore, Western feminist philosophies and methodologies are incapable of solving African women's problems because in many African cultures women deal with men in a proactive way as they use the technique of negotiation and compromise before any problem arrives. Besides, the practice of feminist activities is not foreign to African indigenous traditions and women. Added to that, Nnaemeka seeks to empower and transform indigenous African philosophies of gender relations rather than importing Western feminism that has been shaped by cultural realities alien to African women and their respective societies by extension. Nnaemeka (2003) further

elaborates her model by giving two definitions: "first, nego-feminism is the feminism of negotiation; second, nego-feminism stands for "no ego" feminism" (p. 377). This implies nego-feminism has no intent to militantly battle with men since negotiation is the middle place where men and women meet in compromise that Nnaemeka calls "the third space engagement" (2003, p. 360). According to her, the third space is a boundless dynamic place where both men and women come together to freely deal with issues of theorizing and practicing about enabling mutually cooperative and concomitant society in which there exists an equal platform where men and women participate in planning and policy making process in a diplomatic way.

Moreover, like African womanism, nego-feminism denigrates African-American feminists for ignoring African women's peculiarity because they "presume to be able to speak in the name of all Black women" and they "do not see beyond their own society and hence ignore or marginalize the specific problems of African women" (Arndt, 2002, p. 53). Like Western feminism that universalizes women's subordination without considering the existence of varied and distinctive problems and experiences of women in different cultural situations around the world, African-American feminists universalize black women's issues without realizing African women's circumstances in various and diversified cultural contexts of African nations (Arndt, 2002). Nego-feminism also accepts that there were features of gender inequalities in traditional or pre-colonial African cultures (Alkali et al., 2013; John, 2017). In addition, historical factors need to be thoroughly scrutinized in an objective manner as well as the pre-colonial socio-cultural features of African people along with women's position have to be examined by identifying the positive and negative aspects of that culture (John, 2017).

In the view of nego-feminism, the root causes of women's suppression and subjugation should be examined based on complete realization of cultural differences and existing social realities. Nego-feminism clearly recognizes that multiple oppressive structures in post-colonial African context can effectively be disrupted through negotiation and cooperation. It understands that African women's subordination and suppressions are also clearly linked with the post-independence African nations' inability to bring all-rounded economic and social development in the continent since the post-colonial African development process has been engineered by Western neo-colonizers and it has left behind African ideals of humanity, accountability, cooperation, and true partnership (Jacobs, 2011). Nnaemeka elaborates the post-colonial scenarios of African nations:

> As processes of unequal power relations, colonialism, development, and even current so-called globalization focus more on the material and less on the human. Colonialism's focus on natural resources, institutions, and frameworks is matched by development's focus on economics, institutions, and processes. The same goes for "the world in motion" in this age of globalization where resources, capital, and skills are more "in motion" than certain categories of humans mostly poor, unskilled, people of color from the so-called third world immigration policies of many Western nations are designed to regulate and manage the flow (2003, p. 370).

This shows that the colonized people in general and African people in particular are under indirect control of the Western and other developed nations around the world. As neo-colonial power exploits the natural resources of the colonized people without giving attention to the well-being of colonized humanities, globalization as a form of neo-colonialism continues suppressing people from developing countries. As Africa is categorized under the third world, many African countries have been falling under the colony of poverty and thus women and lower class African people including children have been the main victims of post-colonial poverty. Nego-feminism regards transformation or development issues as critically relevant in theorizing gender issues in the African continent because African women have been excessively wedged by the imbalanced distribution of material resources in the continent.

Like stiwanism, nego-feminism seeks enduring socio-cultural transformation or development that demands success through cooperation and negotiation between men and women in a democratic way. Nnaemeka (2003) has noted that the post-colonial African development route has been problematic at both theoretical and practical levels because of "leaving behind African ideals of humanity, responsibility, compromise, and true partnership at the heart of democratic values that would have smoothed the rough edges of the so-called development in theory and practice" (p. 375). This implies that the African transformation process has to be supported by theories and practical guidelines, which should be developed based on experiences and existing contexts of each country in the continent.

Unless the development endeavor bases its methodologies and practice on realistic and indigenous African traditions and philosophies that celebrate responsible, cooperative and harmonized engagement, it is impossible to attain viable development in Africa (Nnaemeka, 2003). Hence,

nego-feminism seems to restore and transform the pre-colonial harmonious principles of African people in order to bring lasting development to the continent and lasting freedom to African women and poor people instead of relying on neo-colonizers' theories and philosophies. Consequently, "a pedagogy and a philosophy of social change, feminism mandates involvement, and as an ethics of fair share and live and let live, it advocates moderation and negotiation and counsels against extremes and winner-take-all mentality" (Nnaemeka, 2005, p. 163). By this means, nego-feminism employs the culture of negotiation and compromise in order to bring all rounded transformations that secure women's lasting emancipation from suppressive conditions rather than the militant way thatis favored by Western feminism. The reason for this is that many African cultures commonly embrace features of negotiation, compromise and collaboration. As African women of yesterday did, African women of today and perhaps of tomorrow are/ will volunteer to deal with men in a polite way of negotiation despite tough and depriving contexts in which they live (Nnaemeka, 2003).

In many African cultures, gender (maleness and femaleness) are conceived as complementary rather than oppositional as perceived in Western feminism. Maleness and femaleness are perceived as part of the human same so that each sex sets up the vital half that enables a person to be a complete human since male cannot obtain complete self without female (Nnaemeka, 2003). Thus, it would be wrong to see gender based power relations in the African context as binary oppositional. Western feminist methods of struggle cannot fit with African cultural contexts where social harmony, collective and cooperative life, and binary complementarity of sexes have been highly valued and reflected in people's everyday life. To this end, nego-feminism has designed its resistance tools in a systematic way that incorporates men (the potential oppressors of women) to be part of the solution with the intention of creating a harmonious and transformed society that stands against women's subjugation and oppression (Nnaemeka, 2003).

Another prominent point in nego-feminism is its recognition of motherhood with the assumption that the ontological, epistemological, and pedagogical basis of African feminism largely depends on motherhood (Nnaemeka, 2005). Unlike the Western feminists who associate motherhood with victimhood and passivity, the founder of nego-feminism, Nnaemeka positively regards African feminist literary scholars for their endeavor "to delink motherhood and victimhood the way they separate wifehood and motherhood" (2005, p. 5). African women writers recognize the privileging

of motherhood in many African family organizations in contrast with the distorted meaning of motherhood in Western feminism (Oyewumi, 2003). Nnaemeka (2005) further finds out that in African feminist literary discourses, motherhood has been represented as an experience in which any mother is entitled for both prize and challenge in contrast with its patriarchal notion that relegates it to submissiveness and servitude. This is because "African women's engagement still nurtures the compromise and hopefulness needed to build a harmonious society" (Nnaemeka, 2003, p. 381). Even though mothering has many challenges in African context, most mothers compromise such pain with the joy and reward that they get from children as well as from their society by extension.

In short, nego-feminism as one of the indigenous models of African feminism has dealt with various issues of women and their respective societies in its theorizing of gender relations in the post-colonial African context. It has sorted out various roots of women's suppression in Africa and suggested problem-resolving mechanisms that are based on indigenous philosophical grounds of African women in African cultures. While refuting the relevance of Western feminism and Western based philosophies of development and transformation in African circumstances, it proposes negotiation and compromise as effective methods of combating all forms of women and their societies' subjugation and suppression in contemporary African settings. Hence, nego-feminism strives to create harmonized and cooperative societies where women and men deal with problems and other issues pertinent to their lives in diplomatic and mutually understandable approaches.

3.3.2 Conclusion: Differences and Similarities among Models of African Feminism

In this section, differences and convergences among the models of African feminism have been identified. To begin with diverging issues, although most of the basic principles of each model converges, there are some differences concerning each model's prioritization of one principle from the other (Alkali et al., 2013; Arndt, 2002). For instance, womanists' consideration of men is weaker than others do. Womanism, although it does not contest with men and considers likeminded men as womanists, encourages women to be independent instead of relying on men. It primarily gives due attention to women's economic independence and self-reliance arguing that for instance, a woman can independently hold single parenting in the absence of father. Stiwanism instead, firmly claims that women's subordination and oppression can only be terminated when both men and

women are equally committed to bring social transformation. Hence, for stiwanism, establishing cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship between men and women is a core principle without which women's active involvement in social transformation becomes unbearable.

On the other hand, motherism gives special attention to mother-child space such as nurture, nature, love and respect as the main focus of African based gender relation issues. Yet, nego-feminism emphasizes a broad range of negotiation, compromise and tolerance. It gives more priority to systematic application of the culture of negotiation and compromise in order to solve multiple problems of African women. Nego-feminism surrounds issues of peace, conflict management and resolution, negotiation, complementarity, understanding, and alliance.

Besides, while womanism, stiwanism and nego-feminism claim that indigenous African cultures contain some aspects of patriarchal structures; motherism contends that in pre-Islamic and pre-Christian African traditions, there was no patriarchy, but it was introduced on the continent through Islam and Christianity, and later maintained by colonialism. Even though womanism, stiwanism and nego-feminism recognize binary complementariness of men and women in African cultures, motherism claims that its model is gender neutral despite the fact that it recognizes the existence of binary complementarity of sexes in African cultures.

Furthermore, while stiwanism advises African women to read Western white feminist discourses with clear recognition of the cultural and social realities of African women that are clearly different from their white counterparts, the other three models totally reject Western feminism. What is more, while womanism, motherism and nego-feminism criticize African-American feminists for neglecting African cultural peculiarities in their discourses, stiwanism limits its criticism to white Western feminism for the same reason.

Apart from the above differences, all models have many similarities. All models of African feminism agree that feminist movement and activities were/are not alien to African traditions, and African women did not learn the concept of resistance to oppression from Western feminists. Besides, all models take gender issues beyond sexism and include multiple forms of oppression that result from social, cultural, economic, political and other realities of African people and contend that full liberation of women cannot be obtained unless all multiple sources of oppression are dried. Thus, they condemn Western feminists for failing to consider divergent experiences of

African women in different societies and cultures as well as various oppressive sources of African women as they universalize women's subordination resulted from patriarchy.

In addition, each model of African feminism politicizes its struggle for women's rights and decolonizes the misappropriation of the image of African women by the Western feminist discourses and colonial/ neo-colonial hegemony as well as convicts un-African religions (Christianity and Islam) claiming that they introduced and maintained African women's suppression as well they dismissed indigenous traditions and belief systems. Hence, all strands of African feminism aim at discussing gender issues in the context of diverse mechanisms of gender oppression such as patriarchy, post-colonial impediments, racism, colonialism/ neo-colonialism or globalization, cultural subjugation and assimilations, poverty and socio-economic imbalance, political segregation, and impact of foreign religions on lives of African women.

Moreover, all models, while embracing African indigenous cultural traditions, strive to transform backward and suppressive practices and attitudes enabling them to adapt to the dynamic and ever moving time of the contemporary world. Instead of prioritizing oppressed women, they devotedly work to build comfortable and wealthy Africa where men and women could have mutually beneficial, transformative, and progressive relationships in the private and public spheres. Despite Western feminists' exaggeration, all models of African feminism except motherism agree that traditional African cultures exhibit patriarchal structures. Yet, they argue that patriarchal ideology and practices are not stable and they change from time to time being molded by multiple factors like religion, imperialism, colonialism/neo-colonialism, and contemporary globalization. Furthermore, all models examine how post-colonial development failure of African nations impact on women, children and ordinary or poor people of the continent. By analyzing multiple roots of oppression, each model endeavors to provide lasting solutions.

Furthermore, all models of African feminism have rejected the patriarchal notion of motherhood that has been challenged by Western feminism that associates motherhood with victimhood. In African feminism (in all the above models), motherhood is perceived differently as a powerful spiritual and identity base or symbol of African continent and its populations, but it had lost its celebrated status and got marginalized because of colonialism. African feminists attempt to reinstate and transform the pre-colonial authorized and highly dignified status of motherhood considering it as one of the fundamental weapons to fight against women's suppression since they

recognize mothers' role as providers of life, center of morality, transmitters of traditions, models of resistance, nurturers of society, and storehouses of love and collaboration.

What is more, all African feminist models base their resistance principles on indigenous socio-cultural values of African people such as reestablishing cooperative and mutual benefiting relationship between men and women with the assumption of binary complementary existence of men and women rather than binary opposites. As well, each model emphasizes on rebuilding the culture of negotiation and compromise, recreating harmonious societies, regaining family centeredness and kinship unity that had been every day activities and traditions of the pre-colonial African societies. All the more, these African feminist models reject homosexuality and instead embrace heterosexual relations with acceptance of African marriage institution as long as it does not oppress women and does not limit women's role to domestic activities.

In general, African feminist novels should exhibit the above discussed basic principles and strategies of African feminism. To this end, the present research employs the above identified shared principles of African feminist models as the theoretical framework to analyze the selected novels. Specific attention is given to how each novel attempts to:

- disclose, resist/ support the patriarchal structures and their oppression of women;
- scrutinize and identify post-independence bad governance systems and extent of poverty in African nations and suggest ways of resolving them;
- decolonize/maintain the colonial/ neo-colonial/ Western feminists' misrepresentation of African women's identities and their indigenous culture;
- reveal, condemn/ strengthen women's identity crisis and race based discrimination;
- appreciate/denounce un-African religions and homosexuality;
- maintain/devalue the need of cooperative relationship between men and women through negotiation and compromise on a complimentary basis to bring social transformation;
- promote or authorize/ undermine motherhood, family centered struggle, and kinship solidarity.

Chapter Four: African Feminism in East African Novels

This chapter presents analyses and interpretations of the novels selected from the East African region. The region is conceived as "a wide diversity of cultural patterns, languages, ethnic identities and religious practices" (Makokha, 2011, p. 9). This region is generally addressed in African literary studies "as one heterogeneous unit with a high degree of similarities in terms of multiracial and intercultural aspects that arise from pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial contexts" (Makokha, 2011, p. 9). Two Anglophone novels are selected from Uganda and Somalia representing the East African region and thus, this chapter deals with African feminist analyses of the Ugandan novel, *Kintu* by Makumbi (2014) and the Somali novel, *Hiding in Plain Sight* by Farah (2014) in a respective order. Each novel is analyzed after its plot summary is provided.

4.1 Summary of *Kintu* (2014)

Makumbi's *Kintu* centers on myth of the pre-colonial Buganda Kingdom by relating the mythical history with post-colonial situations of Uganda. The novel got is title from the popular mythical ancestor of the Ganda people, Kintu Kidda, who was the chief governor of pre-colonial Buddu Province of Buganda Kingdom, and it is narrated in the third person omnscient point of view and all the major characters are grand descendents of the pre-colonial man, Kintu Kidda. Although the traditional Buganda culture dictates that twins should get married to one man, using his power, Kintu initially marries Nnakato refusing Babirye. However, Nnakoto fails to bear a child and Kintu brings Babirye with the intent to get children. Then Babirye bears four sets of twins (eight children) to him, but she is denied her maternal right because the children are given to Nnakato whom Kintu loves more.

Kintu voyages to a place called Lubya to pay reverence to Kyabaggu, the new *Kabaka* or King of the Buganda. In the journey, Kintu accidentally kills Kalema, a Tutsi man named Ntwire's son whom he adopts as the twin brother of Baale, the only son of Nnakato. Thus, Ntwire curses Kintu and this results death to Kintu's son Baale on the eve of his wedding; hence, Baale's mother, Nnakato commits suicide, and Kintu disappears for he fails to cope up with the grief of losing the most beloved ones.

Ntwire's cursing has been transferring from generation to generation and affecting Kintu's ancestors. Suubi Nnakintu, Magda, Kanani Kintu, Faisi, Ruth, Job, Paulo Miisi, Kamu, Kusi,

Nnamata and Isaac are contemporary characters. Suubi is an orphan female character whose mother died along with her twin sister, Ssanyu and her father, Wasswa also commits suicide after killing his twin brother. Until she is five years old, Suubi has stayed with her grandmother (her father's mother). After her grandmother dies, she falls under her cruel aunt, Kulata (her mother's sister) who leads a hand to mouth life in a rented room in modern Uganda. Later Kulata has thrown her out and she is offered to live with Toofa, a boy who has rented toilet like room in the compound. When Suubi is about eleven years old, she becomes a servant in a house of well to do family called Kiyaga whom she considers as her parent being victim of forgetting. Later, she learns that Kiyaga is not her father as his clan members exclude her from attending his funeral rites. Then, she finds her family root with the help of her boyfriend, Opolot.

Kanani Kintu and Faisi are Angelical Christian couple who have twin children: Job (male) and Ruth (female). Ruth becomes pregnant at the age of fourteen as a result of her secret relation with a Tutsi man, Kalemanzira who fetches water for the family. After the family has learned her pregnancy, she is sent to a village to be treated by her aunt, Magda. There she gives birth to a baby boy called Paulo and rejoins her parents. Paulo grows up in his grandparents' house and when he is sixteen, he learns that his father is Kalemanzira who flees to Rwanda, and thus he changes his Ganda surname Nsobya to Kalemanzira. Then, Paulo knows Magda when she brings a letter to her brother, Kanani upon calling family reunion of Kintu Gidda's grand ancestors.

Isaac's father, Newton Kintu who is a Mathematics teacher rapes his student, Nnamata and flees as he fears chastisement and stays suffering from mental illness. The rape results in Isaac's birth. Isaac is brought up by his grandmother and later joins Mekerere University, where he is graduated in Electrical Engineering and marries Nnayiga. Kamu's father, Miisi loses his five children because of ancestral curse and other five due to war between government and rebels. Miisi is educated in Russia and Britain and becomes lecturer at Makerere University, but stops teaching and leaves the city to rejoin his first wife who dwells in a village. At the village, he meets two men who claim that they are his cousins. These men ask him to lead his clan for the ancestral family reunion and tell him about their ancestral curse because of their grand ancestor, Kintu Kidda. Then, Miisi calls home his two surviving children a female General, Kusi and son, Kamu but only Kusi comes since Kamu has been murdered in Kampala by mob attackers.

During the homecoming rituals, all the clan members come to a place called Kiyiika where their ancestral root begins. At Kiyiika Village, all the clan except Kanani tour Nnakato's hill where they build a shrine and dig out coffins of Kintu, Nnakato and Kalemu and rebury the bodies by paying animal sacrifice to cleanse the clan from the heritable curse under the leadership of an eldest clan Medium called Muganda. The ritual closes up with members of the clan's visit to a gorge where they all are ordered by Muganda to wash their faces, hands and feet by the spring, which symbolizes cleansing of generation curse. However, Muganda is gripped by Ntwire's demon for trying to separate the Tutsi father and son, and the demon demands Tutsi blood. Tutsi soldiers who accompany Miisi's daughter, General Kusi to Kiiyika give blood for Muganda. Then, Kusi informs Miisi about her brother, Kamu's death and finally Miisi is chosen by the ancestral sprit and decides to live in Kiyiika Village rejecting his family's claim to take him back home.

4.1.1 Representation of Patriarchy

In many African cultures, bigamy or polygamy is allowed to men whereas it is forbidden to women. Even though this marriage institution has been associated with and explained in terms of Islamic tradition, "Polygamy in Africa existed before the arrival of Islam" (Sadia, 2016, p. 171). African feminists like Ogunyemi (1985) and Nnaemeka (2005) posit that polygamy lessens women's burden because the co-wives share gender role responsibilities. Besides, since African rural economy is based on manual agriculture, polygamy enables a family to have many children who could work on farms so that the family can be wealthy. Thus, African feminists criticize Western feminism for misconstruing African polygamy.

Nevertheless, in *Kintu*, Makumbi (2014) unveils that in Uganda's Ganda tradition, polygamy operates badly in a way that "made the Ganda custom of marrying female identical twins to the same man preposterous...Besides, identical men did not marry the same woman" (p. 9). Since twin girls cannot be a single person, it is unfair to force them to get married to a single man. The patriarchal partisan has been clearly observed as the tradition fails to compel men twins to marry a single woman. As polygamy does not allow women to marry more than one husband, it is the woman who suffers such patriarchal injustices. Thus, Makumbi wants to transform such tradition into what protects from women suppressing practices. Twin female characters, Babirye and Nnakato are victims of this tradition. The worst to happen is that the parents of the twin girls want them to marry one man Kintu who prefers only Nnakato with the assumption not to disperse the

twins. However, Kintu using his power marries only Nnakato first, but later as Nnakato is unable to bear child, "Nnakato suggested that Babirye come and help her with conception" (Makumbi, 2014, p. 11). Kintu has brought Babriye just to please his beloved wife Nnakato so that he does not consider her as a wife. In that way, Babirye bears eight children to Kintu; nonetheless, she is not entitled to be their mother:

> Babirye gave birth to twins. She nursed the babies until they started to run. Then she returned home to her parents…Nnakato and Babirye were both called Nnabalongo, the children called both of them "Mother", but in her heart Babirye knew that when people called her Nnabalongo they were talking to her sister. She knew that the children called her Mother not because she had knelt down in pain to bring them into the world, but because she was their mother's sister. Babirye's eight children belonged to Nnakato (Makumbi, 2014, p. 12).

In African polygamy, one who decides to marry more than one woman should fulfill requirements such as avoiding partisanship among the co-wives and ensuring his sexual ability to satisfy all wives; unless he is advised to have only one wife (Nnaemeka, 2005). Yet, Kintu fails to exhibit the factors that are expected from a polygamous man. Indeed, Babirye has been denied her maternal right because her children consider Nnakato as their biological mother and Barbirye as their aunt. This is due to the fact that the children have been misinformed and Babirye has been silenced since she fully submits herself and her will to patriarchal demand that compels women to remain under the total control of men. Even though Babirye is the actual mother of the children, she fails to show them her maternal role and right.

Kintu deconstructs the society's tradition that grants the privilege to be nominated as "original soul" to the first-born child Babriye since he considers Nnakato as original one. "The older twin, Babirye for girls, was supposedly the original soul. Nnakato, the younger twin, was the copy...For him, Nnakato was the original" (Makumbi, 2014, p. 8). It is obvious that Kintu must provide more things to Nnakato than Babirye and the later suffers from psychological and material oppression. Both Kintu and his beloved wife Nnakato count Babirye as an object whom they use as a simple instrument whenever they want. Likewise, children are victims of such partiality:

> Finally, Nnakato gave birth to a son, Baale. That is when trouble started. While to the family Kintu's love for Baale was mere indulgence of himself and his youngest son, Babirye saw it as Kintu wedging a distinction between her "own" children and Nnakato's son, that he never loved "her" children the way he loved Baale (Makumbi, 2014, p. 15).

What badly affects Babirye is not only her own discrimination by Kintu but also his leaning towards the son of his beloved wife, Nnakato. Here, it can be perceived that Kintu's unreserved love is not intended for Baale, but for Nnakato. This indicates that the patriarchal culture that allows men to engage in bigamy or polygamy puts women and children in a repressive life. Because of such discriminations, the co-wives always see each other as rivals regardless of their blood bond as the following complaint of Nnakato against Babirye suggests.

> Babirye, you wanted a piece of my marriage, I gave it to you. You wanted my man; I shared him with you. You had eight children with him; I never begrudged you any of them. All I had was that one boy, a single sprout, but you begrudged him. You complained that he would be heir instead of your sons. You said that our husband loved him more than he loved yours. I never wedged a line between your children and mine. Yet you found fault with him. You found fault with our husband. You have complained and complained all our life but this is it. You can have it all: man, marriage, home, and family (Makumbi, 2014, p. 78).

In spite of being twin sisters, Nnakato and Babirye see each other as rivals due to patriarchal injustices that they encounter as co-wives of the polygamous man. As Nnakato has been observing her husband's subjectivity towards her and its psychological effect on Babirye, she concludes that Babirye has killed her only son, Baale because of the jealousy. At this point, the author of the novel seems to note that what creates a gap between the sisters is that polygamy's injustice that compel them to share a single man who is partisan towards one of the twins. In many African cultures in general and in the Ganda tradition in particular, relatives and mainly sisters, are believed to be sympathetic to each other and one's problem or grief cannot give relief to the other (Amolo, 2017). Hence, the patriarchal burden that forces the twins to see each other as enemies has deteriorated their sisterhood affection to one another. As a result, Nnakato stands against

Babirye upon the death of her beloved son claiming that she is responsible for his death since she envies Kintu's special attention of him neglecting his other eight sons he bears from Babirye.

In Buganda's patriarchal culture, ordinary women were considered as objects to be given to royal men as gifts. The real purpose of women as gifts in Buganda tradition became important for the political and social ladder. Every clan offered women to the King and these women were qualified on tactics of capturing the attention of the King in order to bear a child for the noble family (Matlawe, 2003). This is also revealed in *Kintu* as the narrator says that "for the *ba kabaka*, women brought to them were put away to entertain envoys, dignitaries, and other guests" (Makumbi, 2014, p. 14). Similarly, Kintu is given many girls by their parents as gifts. Even though all are called as Kintu's wives, they are like slaves under the control of his first beloved head wife, Nnakato:

> Kintu married other women besides Nnakato. The women were brought to him as tributes: some from ambitious parents, others were daughters of fellow governors… Nnakato was in charge of the wives. When a bride arrived, she named and allocated her a role within the family there were those good with children, creative ones who concentrated on crafts; those with a lucky hand in farming and who produced more food....She put in place a roster: every wife would have a child at least once in three years, ideally, once in every two years…Nnakato brought the wives who failed to conceive to Mayirika and asked him to double his efforts (Makumbi, 2014, p. 14).

Whether Nnakato's co-wives are from royal or ordinary backgrounds, she has unquestionable authority over them. In fact, these wives have been relegated to the positions of domestic animals because each of them has an obligation to bear children to remain from punishment. This designates that Nnakato has even more power than Kintu concerning house heading. Such exposition of patriarchal oppression equates Makumbi (2014) with the notable Nigerian feminist novelist, Buchi Emechata whose novels disclose patriarchal ideology and practices of Nigerian society that grants men privilege and suppresses women in various stereotypical ways (Sadia, 2016). However, although Makumbi's depiction of Nnakato's power resulting from Kintu's bias towards her, it indirectly deconstructs the Western feminists' stereotypical consideration of "all African women who engage in polygamous marriage as victims who are morons or powerless" (Nnaemeka, 2005, p. 167). Since Western feminists stereotypically regard African cultural

traditions like polygamy as oppressive to all women, they ignore the reality that head wives like Nnakato bear absolute power.

Furthermore, *Kintu* demonstrates that the tradition of polygamy in pre-colonial Ganda society, which benefits the beloved head wives and oppresses ordinary co-wives, is being transferred from generation to generation, and it has been practiced in post-colonial Uganda's Ganda society like in the case of Magda/ Bweeza. "Magda's husband had three homes. Each home had a wife and a farm...Bwanika spent two weeks with his first wife and a week each with Magda and the third wife in Ssemuto" (Makumbi, 2014, pp. 189-190). This quotation points out that polygamy in Buganda society has been practiced by the new generations in the same way as it has been operated by their pre-colonial forefathers. Analogous to his ancestor Kintu, who lived in pre-colonial Buganda, the post-colonial man, Bwanika, shows partiality among his three wives. As Kintu does, his first wife is his favorite wife who is placed in the main farm and with whom he spends two weeks while giving a single week to each of his two other wives.

4.1.2 Women and Post-independence Snags

African people fought against colonialism with the hope of building a peaceful, democratic, free, prosperous, and independent continent. However, immediately after independence, the citizens disillusioned that the anti-colonial promises had been lost due to the failure of the post-colonial African leaders. As a result, many post-colonial African countries remain under countless problems such as poverty, civil war, political instability, corruption, lawlessness and the like (Anthony & Kolawole, 2014; Melakneh, 2008; Mikell, 1997). Even though Uganda got its independence from British colonialism in 1962, the nation has not been stable and secure due to the continuous military coups and civil wars (Amolo, 2017). Matlawe (2003) strengthens, "The dawn of independence in 1962, ushered full suffrage for both men and women"; particularly, "women remained marginalized and the ruling party failed to take into account the fact that women had been continuously excluded from formal politics" (p. 39). Thus, as the post-colonial Ugandan political elites have been fighting each other for power, they fail to develop the nation and majority of citizens remain in deep-rooted poverty. Makumbi's *Kintu* (2014) broadly describes the extent of poverty in a post-independence Ugandan context, to which the most vulnerable ones are women. In the novel, many women characters suffer from poverty in rented rooms in post-colonial Uganda's village, Bulange.

> The widow provided her tenants with a makeshift shelter, walls, a rough floor, and a door…The tenants called her unfinished house the Palace…the Palace had over ten rooms....A family of seven rented what should have been the sitting and dining rooms....The kitchen and pantry were rented by a couple who behaved like strangers during the day, but the wife was always pregnant and nursing a baby. The second bedroom was rented by a gaudy single mother, Balinda. She had five kids who all looked about the same age….The tenants, like cockroaches, would not stir. Once, overcome by fury over the non-payment of rent, the widow stood in the corridor and let off a high-pitched lament. "This world is a blender," she said. "Who would have thought that I, the wife of a high court judge, would beg for rent from cockroaches?" If she saw a family eat fish or meat or even three proper meals a day, then they had better have her money ready at the end of the month (Makumbi, 2014, p. 101).

It is known that shelter is one of the basic needs to human beings; nevertheless, many Ugandan people are homeless who run miserable life as tenants. Surprisingly, this problem has been happening not only in the most populated city Kampala but also in villages, like Bulange where relatively few reside. This implies how contemporary Ugandan lower class people are sunk down under appalling poverty. This extract also vividly portrays that because of their destitution, the renters have been undermined and psychologically injured by the owner of the house (Landlady), who proudly speaks of her past glory due to her husband's political position that kept him establishing strong relations with the British colonial power, nags them equating with an insect, cockroach. This means that there still exists class differences in Uganda, the country, which has been administered for many decades by the indigenous black Ugandan political elites. The following extract reveals class differences among post-colonial Black Ugandans.

> In colonial times, educated Ugandans had lived on the floodplains while Europeans lived up in the hills. When the Europeans left, educated Ugandans climbed out of the swamps, slaked off the mud, and took to the hills and raw Ugandans flooded the swamps. Up in the hills, educated Ugandans assumed the same contempt as Europeans had for them. In any case, suspicion from up in the hills fell down into the swamps—all swamp dwellers were thieves (Makumbi, 2014, p. xvi).

In the above quotation, Makumbi maintains African feminists claim that the end of colonialism has brought nothing to women and ordinary people except the privilege that the white colonizers had occupied has shifted or handed over to black elites. Because of the class difference, the educated Ugandans who dwell where colonizers left to them treats the poor ones in the same way as colonizers treated all blacks so that habitants of swamps are called thieves. This is due to the fact that all these people are poor and in order to survive they may steal. However, labeling such people as thieves or exposing them to custody cannot be resolution; rather as many African feminists claim, the lasting solution has to be socio-economic transformation. This is the reason that compels African feminists to give less attention to sexism and instead to emphasize on ways of altering disastrous conditions of post-colonial African nations realizing that proper development plays an important role in pulling up women and their societies. Particularly, the weight of post-colonial development problems lays more on poor girls and women. Even more, added to deep-rooted poverty, HIV/ AIDS worsens the lives of poor women when we see the case of "Kulata lived in a single room in an unfinished house" (Makumbi, 2014, p. 99). The paragraph below maintains that multiple problems have distracted Kulata's life and robbed her sympathy.

> Kulata was angry most of the time...She hated everyone...But Suubi had heard women whisper. Apparently a man, a long time ago, gave Kulata the anger and then ran off with another woman, though the tenants could not agree whether it was the anger that he ran away from, or a lot of miscarriages. You would think that after the man died and then the woman he ran off with joined him, Kulata would find a smile but no, she carries on being angry (Makumbi, 2014, p. 105).

The citation clearly illustrates African feminists' evaluation of women's condition in post-colonial Africa. It is such examination that justifies their inclusion of multi-dimensional causes of suppression in their gender discourses unlike Western feminists who focus on sexism. As one can comprehend from the above text, reasons of Kulata's hot temperedness are multiple. Besides, her outrageous poverty, she has been abandoned by the man who seeks another woman. The case is made worsen when she learns that the man and the woman die of AIDS as well as "the suspicion spread into the village. People started to steal furtive glances at Kulata, looking for the symptoms of that something else...symptom for the new death" (Makumbi, 2014, p. 112). This additional

upsetting cause intensifies her grief as she expects discrimination from the society because of the observable signs of the new disease, AIDS.

Kulata's agony has been aggravated much as she is compelled to be responsible for her deceased sister's daughter, Suubi as she says, "they tried to force that child on me but I said no, I have problems of my own. Today they waited until I was away and dumped her here like garbage" (Makumbi, 2014, p. 98). Thereby, she becomes very cruel and lose sympathy to her orphan niece, Suubi blaming that "God's so evil He could let you live" (Makumbi, 2014, p. 105) and lets her stay around the corridor without food every time she goes to work. Kulata's unkindness to Suubi emanates from poverty and related snugs that always lead her to be distressed. Thereby, post-colonial Uganda's multi-dimensional impediments not only affects orphan children but also it badly suppresses women and leads such women to develop negative attributes that African feminists do not concur with and never expect from an African woman.

Suubi is an outstanding student and achieves an honored rank through hard work and determination, and this enables her to be appreciated by her teachers. "Suubi was made to stand at the podium with the teachers, given free exercise books, textbooks, and pencils and the whole school would be made to clap for her" (Makumbi, 2014, p. 110). However, due to the death of her parents, she has been given to very old grandmother so that she encounters many problems as her grandmother dies soon. In such a life, Suubi becomes victim of an attempted rape by an old man who pretends to help her. This old man deceivingly takes her to the bush and with other men, rapes her. Suubi symbolizes many post-colonial African orphan children who lead demanding lives under their poor relatives or in streets without protection and her life exemplifies the difficulty of women's education in post-colonial African countries.

Similarly, Nnamata is a very dynamic student as her teachers' witness, "Nnamata is our star student this year...Mr. Puti Kintu, the math teacher at Bat Valley Primary School, offered to give her free private tuition" however "he pushed her against the wall breathing, hmm, you girls always say no" (Makumbi, 2014, p. 239). Thus, Nnamata is raped by the teacher and becomes pregnant. Due to this reason, Nnamata's academic endeavor remains unsuccessful and thus she fails to realize her dreams. In this relation, Kambarami (2006) explains that female students in any post-colonial schools of Africa are victims of sexual abuse because male teachers make sexual advances at them in return for cash, marks, or other material gains and failure to comply may lead

to violence. All the more, *Kintu* uncovers how rich men have sexually exploited girls in post-independence Uganda:

> A shy teenage girl lived in the garage…She was kept by an old man who drove a sleek Mercedes. The girl had been in a boarding school when she stole herself away and came to Kampala with the old man...When the old man came to see her, he hid his Mercedes behind the Palace. He never spent the night. Sometimes the girl was rich, sometimes she was broke, depending on how often the old man visited (Makumbi, 2014, p. 102).

Here, the novelist postulates that in post-independence Uganda, young girls, whether they have parents or not, are seen as sex objects by men. As clearly stated in the above extract, the rich old man visits the girl just to satisfy his sexual thirst. In order to meet his selfish yen, he deceives the girl to dump school and places her in a secret place as a simple object that is required to calm down his sexual thirst whenever he needs. Since this girl has dropped out of school, she does not have a bright future so that her entire life will remain despondent.

Likewise, Kamu who lives in modern Kampala has sexually exploited another unnamed female character known as Kamu's wife. "The only glitch in her quest to become Kamu's full wife was that he still wore a condom with her. With his seed locked away, she had not grown roots deep enough to secure her against future storms" (Makumbi, 2014, p. xv). Kamu's wife is the best example for Ogundipe-Leslie (1994)'s claim that one of the problems of the African woman is her ignorance or backwardness. The dream of Kamu's wife is to be his full wife in a patriarchal way. She is blind to see things beyond patriarchal wifehood that keeps her entire life enslaved. This woman never expresses her desire to have children with him because she fears that he may abandon her if she demands her right for she is poor and dependent on him. "When she visited her parents, Kamu gave her money so she did not go empty-handed" (Makumbi, 2014, p. xv). The woman's role is restricted to household chores so that to fulfill her personal needs, she must look for Kamu's hand since she does not have her own income.

These female characters are created to symbolize how countless girls or women of post-colonial Uganda have been suppressed and sexually exploited by men due to poverty. In line with this, Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) urges women to get education and thus become economically

independent so as to attain full liberation rather than wait for men to grant them freedom. *Kintu* is the continuation of post-colonial disillusionment discourses that expose the failures of post-colonial African leaders to achieve anti-colonial promises and expectations. Particularly, ordinary people of contemporary Uganda suffer from lack of transportation in their day-to-day activities:

> Suubi watched the space where her taxis...normally parked. It was crowded with frustrated commuters.... Suubi closed her mind to the *ehhu*, the *ahhaas,* and the *You can stand there until grass grows around your legs* that the passengers were lamenting to each other (Makumbi, 2014, p. 89).

In the country where the native elite rules, ordinary people, majority of its citizens lead troubled lives. In addition to poverty, the government's failure to fulfill infrastructures and other facilities affect life of the citizens. Many African feminists argue that it is impossible to free women from suppression unless all-rounded development in the nation is brought so that they incorporate post-colonial state failure as one of the oppressive forces against African women and their societies (Nnaemeka, 2003; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994). Besides lack of facilities, lawlessness have been other obstacles that Makumbi's novel enables us to know when drivers increase tariffs as they wish and even beat passengers who resist them:

> Passengers were restless—some sucking their teeth, some scowling, everyone was peering outside to the back of the van... A passenger had refused to pay the same fare as people traveling all the way to Lubaga because his was just half of the journey... The driver turned off the engine, stepped out and banged his door as if to say: *We are taking no nonsense from anyone.* Seeing the driver coming around the van, the passenger handed over the money and everyone heaved a sigh of relief (Makumbi, 2014, p. 93).

Here it should be noted that the disagreement between the passenger and service givers is due to lack of transparent rule that guides both passenger and the taxi staffs. The rule might be documented but fails to be seen in practice so that the passenger knowing the consequences that will follow has changed his resistant mind and gives the expected money. Had there been active law enforcement, the passenger would have secured his right not to be exploited. As all passengers in the car know such problem, they do not want to support the one who resists. Their relief upon

the man's paying the money shows that all are in fear of violence that may touch everyone. Indeed, the narrator explicitly blames the country's president for failing to fulfill the promises he makes when he comes to power labeling him a thief:

> The word *thief* summed up the common enemy. Why there was no supper the previous night; why their children were not on their way to school. *Thief* was the president who arrived two and a half decades ago waving "democracy" at them, who had recently laughed, "Did I actually say democracy? I was so naive then." *Thief* was tax collectors taking their money to redistribute it to the rich. *Thief* was God poised with a can of aerosol *Africancide,* his finger pressing hard on the button...Voices in the crowd swore they were sick of the police arresting thieves (Makumbi, 2014, pp. xviii-xix).

The excerpt is taken from the prologue of the novel that narrates the incident that happened in February 2004 in Kampala. Hence, Makumbi has deliberately forwarded the blame to the contemporary Uganda's President, Yoweri Museveni, who has been in power since 1986. As many African leaders of post-independence do, this president has been making empty promises for more than thirty years. While the government collects tax from the people that expect it to be used for building infrastructure, security, peace, democracy and stability in the nation, the government has been stealing it. Since the government cannot narrow the gap between poor and rich in the nation, and indeed strives to fill the already full pockets of the rich, the prevalence of theft and insecurity in the country is expected.

Even the people do not trust the police as they observe the deeds of police cannot save them from being robbed so that they seek to bring security by violently attacking whom they suspect thieves. It is possible to suggest that Makumbi's aim is not only to criticize thieves but also to blame the political system that leads the people to theft as a means of survival. For example, the brilliant student, Suubi has been forced to use every opportunity to get food so that "she stole from the nonsense women who were not moved to kindness by her thinness" (Makumbi, 2014, p. 104). As one can learn from the life of Suubi, unless she steals, she must die of hunger so that such theft is not initiated due to her personality problem, rather because of the compelling circumstances in which she lives. Moreover, Makumbi seems to blame post-colonial Uganda's presidents, Milton Obote and Idi Amin for the horrible persecutions of their people. Uganda got its independence from British colonialism in 1962 making the indigenous feudal Edward Mutesa II as a president

and Milton Obote as a prime minister, but in 1966 Obote dismissed Mutesa II through Idi Amin and became president. However, again in 1971, Idi Amin carried out coup and removed Obote and again Amin was overthrown in 1979 (Amolo, 2017; Malawe, 2003).

Makumbi's novel depicts Obote and Amin as destructive leaders, being influenced by non-African religions, the former by Western Christianity and the latter by Islam and have created differences among their citizens and committed many murders as: "The problem with Amin was not that he killed people; who hasn't? Amin's sin was that he killed the untouchables—the educated. Where Amin killed an Archbishop, Obote killed a hundred peasants. Did the world cry out?" (Makumbi, 2014, p. 296). Western media paid great attention when Amin killed the bishop and portrayed Amin as cannibal because of his Islamic background, but they gave no attention when Obote killed many peasants and harassed educated citizens of the nation. Particularly, "The British said that Amin killed his son Moses and ate his heart but Moses's mother returns to Uganda and says that her son is alive *in France."* (Makumbi, 2014, p. 297). Nevertheless, the vast majority of Ugandans didn't feel Amin as harshly as you did" (Makumbi, 2014, p. 297) despite the fact that all Ugandans do not deny Amin's dictatorship**.** Thus, Makumbi, while disclosing the problems of post-colonial Ugandan leaders, claims balance and wants to note the colonizers' invisible presence through their legacy in post-independence Uganda and Africa in general:

> We cannot blame the West for the way they present Africans in their media: what do you expect? Our savagery is their civilization. It justifies everything. My problem is the Africans who, knowing this, give them the opportunity. If only African buffoons realized how they drag every black person in the world down in the mud with their follies, they would reconsider (Makumbi, 2014, p. 296).

In the text, Makumbi makes slight difference from the way post-colonial discourses depict the neo-colonial interventions because she gives much responsibility to the African elites and leaders who provide ways that the Westerners degrade African people's humanity and their cultures. Africans should harmonize and strive to falsify the wrong depiction of the continent. Makumbi's blame goes to the selfish political elite who are deaf and blind to listen and see potentially favorable ideas and opportunities from their local counterparts and environments. "All politicians are the same: once in power they imagine that they're the only ones with brains" (2014, p. 295).

This view supports African feminists' claim that post-colonial African leadership has failed due to the rulers' inability to create democratic institutions where all citizens participate equally by providing creative ideas that help the development endeavors of the continent (Nnaemeka, 2003; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994). Here, Makumbi's intent goes beyond women and she attempts to reveal the gloomy circumstances of the post-independence Ugandan poor people. Such portrayal of mal-governance directly by a female novelist implies African women's involvement in the political issues of the continent through literary discourses that had been dominated by male writers.

4.1.3 Resistant Women

Matlawe (2003) states that in the culture of Buganda Kingdom, patriarchal gender roles supervened in discriminations of power and social comportment. Women's roles were relegated to domestic household routines whereas hunting and soldierly activities were considered as privileged men's works. Women were not allowed to perform manly tasks and vice-versa. However, in *Kintu*, some women characters deviate from such norms. For instance, Zaya comes to Kintu's house resisting submitting herself to her husband. Although Kintu's wives try to train her to be a good wife, she does not accept:

> Whatever made women feminine, Zaya had missed out on. She still begged the men to take her hunting, as joining Kintu's bambowa to go to war was out of the question. Gitta did not want her anymore but no man had come asking about her. Zaya did not even care about this "rejected" status of hers (Makumbi, 2014, p. 53).

Zaya has married Gitta being his second wife, but she leaves him and settles in Kintu's house for she does not acquire the attribute of a married woman that patriarchy expects. Instead, she prefers to do what women are forbidden to do. Despite the fact that in traditional African cultures where education is rare, most women prefer to get married as patriarchy dictates them (McFerson, 2012), Zaya does not want to be a wife since she never cares about to be unwanted by men. Thus, when Kintu advises her to reinstate her marriage with Gitta she refuses saying that she will kill herself if she is compelled to go back to Gitta. Consequently, Zaya deconstructs the patriarchal notion of wifehood. In the same way, princess Mazzi, the daughter of Buganda King Kyabaggu also refuses a married life as a resistance against patriarchal tradition.

> She had lasted only three days in marriage after the honeymoon because, as she lisped when she returned to her grandmother Nnabulya: The husband wanted breakfast; I made it. He asked for lunch; I made it. Then he wanted supper and like a good person, I made it. For two days I suffered silently but then on the third day he was at it again can you imagine the ash?...She refused to return to marriage even when she was given servants to take with her (Makumbi, 2014, p. 61).

It has to be clear here that Mazzi does not totally refuse to be a wife or marriage, but she has rejected the patriarchal wifehood that denies equality and freedom to women and relegates them to domestic gender roles. If she had rejected wifehood, she could have refused marriage initially. Thus, what Mazzi rejected is to be restricted to serve her husband in accordance with patriarchal gender roles. In traditional gender roles, women's roles are constrained to household chores like cooking and treating husbands while men are placed to carry out outdoor and manly tasks (Ezeaku, 2014). Nonetheless, Mazzi does not want to continue her mother's and grandmothers' tradition so that she questions the patriarchal power that let women to submit themselves to husbands. Because she thinks marriage in patriarchal culture oppresses women, Mazzi decides to remain unmarried. This indicates that Buganda women were not inert addressees of patriarchal subjugations, but they had been resisting domination and striving to alter their positions.

Moreover, Makumbi (2014) subverts the patriarchal projection of women as feeble and emotional through the pre-colonial woman character, Nnassolo who has been both physically and mentally strong warrior who overthrows a king. In the traditional Buddu Province of Buganda, there was contest among brothers to grasp the marvelous political power called *Kabaka*, which means king. This tradition had been continued by destroying a brother who held power and thus seizing the power from him (Matlawe, 2003). Although such fighting for power was made among kings and princes, in *Kintu*, the woman character, Nnassolo defeats much feared *Kabaka* called Kagulu.

> Kagulu fled and Nnassolo pursued him. Kagulu was as swift as a kob on a savannah but Nnassolo was relentless: she wanted his jawbone. Kagulu hid in ditches and caves in Buto region. When he was captured, Kagulu who had put masses to the spear would not face his own death like a man. Mercifully, Nnassolo had him drowned. Nnassolo then installed the softly older brother Kikulwe as kabaka (Makumbi, 2014, p. 5).

In patriarchal ideology, women are considered as weak and emotional in contrast with strong and intellectual men. They are given domestic chores whereas men are engaged in privileged activities such as leadership, war, hunting and the like (Tyson, 2006). Nonetheless, the female combatant, Nnassolo destroys Kagulu although the one who sits in power is the male Kikulwe because in the patriarchal culture, women are not allowed to rule even if they have extraordinary ability. Even though she is not appointed as per her competence, Nnassolo's victory falsifies the patriarchal stereotype that women are physically and mentally weaker than men. She practically shows that women are able to lead and win war, which requires both mental and physical competence. Her victory over the group led by men strengthens that women are not naturally weak, but they can achieve excellent results if they are given the chance to perform tasks that are restricted to men.

Makumbi's characterization of pre-colonial African women Zaya, Mazzi and Nnassolo emphasizes African feminists' argument that the feminist movement is not imported from the Western world to Africa; rather in the traditional African culture, there had been brilliant feminists who had wrestled against patriarchal oppression. Such portrayal of women equates Makumbi with the prominent Nigerian feminist novelist, Akachi Ezeigbo who reevaluates and subverts the patriarchal antiquity in order to change negative depictions of women in her feminist and literary discourses (Ezeaku, 2014). In most African cultures, there have been indigenous manifestations of resistance and activism among women going back to pre-colonial times and many African feminist novelists like Makumbi and Ezeigbo depict such women by re-writing the distorted history of the pre-colonial African women. Another similar instance is seen in Makumbi's *Kintu* when the post-colonial female character, Kusi is the only survived fighter during Uganda's civil war in which she takes part when she is twelve years old. Because of her competence, she achieves the highest rank in the army:

> Kusi had joined the rebels at the same time as her brothers. Despite the fact that she was only twelve at the time, she was the only combatant in the family to survive the bush war. When the war ended in '86, she refused to give up her gun, saying she did not know how to do anything else…She had now risen to the rank of general (Makumbi, 2014, p. 333).

The post-independence Ugandan woman character, Kusi is as strong as her grand ancestor Nnassolo is since she fights against and wins her enemy. Even she has been very young when she

has joined the army, yet only she survives in a situation where all her brothers (male) are unable to protect themselves. Her psychological and intellectual excellence in military position is admired, and thus she achieves the highest military ladder only men had/have climbed. By presenting Nnassolo and Kusi comparatively, Makumbi (2014) deconstructs the negative depiction of women characters in the earlier African novels. Such presentation of female characters likens Makumbi with her counterpart Kenyan women novelists such as Rebeka Njau, Grace Ogot, Margaret Ogolo and Marjorie Macgoye who have bravely shown the strong sides of women in their novels while unveiling limitless injustices of male dominance (Cherop, 2015).

4.1.4 Negotiation and Compromise

African feminists (such as Kolawole, 2004; Nnaemeka, 2003; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994; Ogunyemi, 1985) among others have accepted negotiation and compromise as effective tools to systematically subvert patriarchal oppressive thoughts and norms. Negotiation, in an African feminist context, implies that women domineering circumstances are addressed and challenged through context-oriented tactic that may direct toward avoiding confrontational battle.

Makumbi (2014) confirms that negotiation and compromise had been the tradition of Buganda's Ganda society that Suubi's grandmother narrates: "We Ganda were known the world over for our hospitality because we treated those who settled among us well. However, we asked for one little thing in return for our hospitality; one little thing-that everyone who settled among us became Ganda" (Makumbi, 2014, p. 90). Nnaemaka (2003) argues that many African traditions are characterized by negotiation and compromise which the people had/ have been using as effective tools of mitigating disagreement and differences. In the above quotation, Makumbi confirms Nnaemeka's argument through an old woman character, Suubi's grandmother, who tells such stories to her granddaughter.

With the notion of 'give and take,' the Ganda society had been removing violent provoking instances proactively when other clans from the neighborhood joined them. They negotiated to offer hospitality putting the condition that the strangers must exhibit the Ganda tradition of life including language as a compromise of sharing their resources. It is also important to note here that women, particularly grandmothers' role to transfer such tradition into newer generation as Nnaemeka (2005) asserts, "At the center of the myriads of issues thus raised-history, memory,

wisdom, knowledge, etc.-is the old woman (mother/grandmother); the old woman as storyteller/ historian" (p. 8). This is the reason that African feminism highly values the lived experiences of mothers and grandmothers as survivors of culture and indigenous mechanisms of resistance. The notion of negotiation and compromise has been maintained in the novel through many female characters. For instance, princess Mazzi leaves her married life as she rejects the patriarchal wifehood that limits her role to household routes, but she still remains connected with a man:

> Kintu told Baale that Mazzi, Namugala's youngest daughter, had recently traveled to Buddu. She needed dependable young men to run her temporary home. The princess will introduce you to public and royal etiquette—learn with diligence. Do not bring dishonor onto your mothers. Do whatever she asks with a good heart. Be open to new ways. Keep your eyes and ears open (Makumbi, 2014, p. 59).

This reveals that Mazzi wants man's presence in her life. If she had intended to abandon all men as Western radical feminists do, she would have preferred a girl instead of Baale. Nevertheless, she negotiate with what role should the man have during his stay with her and as per her condition that states 'dependable' man, she has power over Baale in her home and his role is only sexually pleasing her. As she enjoys the affair with him, she does not send back Baale as per her agreement with Kintu that Nnondo, Kintu's servant who has accompanied Baale to Mazzi says, "The princess has had a change of plan. She won't leave until Musenene" (Makumbi, 2014, p. 61). This implies that Princess Mazzi has been free from patriarchal suppression while enjoying sexual life with the man of her preference despite the fact that she does not want marriage.

In addition, Makumbi, through the characterization of Mazzi wants to unveil the history of the Buganda Kingdom that had been flexible to women from royal backgrounds. In this vein, Amolo (2017) states that the Ganda tradition grants freedom to princesses to enjoy sex with men of their choice taking care to avoid pregnancy. This refutes Western feminist thought of African traditions as totally ignorant of women even though patriarchy suppresses ordinary women. Besides, Chief Kintu also reflects the notion of negotiation and compromise since he sends Baale who is going to marry Ntongo to whom he has prepared to give dowry to entertain Mazzi who is the daughter of the King. Kintu wants to benefit from his son's visit as Baale would get an opportunity to meet royal men through Mazzi. Knowing that his son is going to be engaged in sexual activities with the woman who is not his wife as well as who has a bad image in the society for departing

husband: “Mazzi became a metaphor for spoiled brides in the kingdom (Makumbi, 2014, p. 61), Kintu compromises it with the honor of getting acquaintance to royal people. Again, Kintu advises Baale to be easygoing to Mazzi compromising his personal interest to what they seek to get from Mazzi as compensation. Even Nnakato, Baale’s mother does not know about her son’s visit to Mazzi because Kintu knows that she must oppose the idea since everybody knows Mazzi’s notorious personality so that she might not allow her son to stay with the deviant girl.

Correspondingly, Zaya enjoys sexual life with Kintu’s son, Baale. We note this when Miisi’s cousins trace their origin as “this Kidda that we three share. Baale had Kidda by a servant called Zaya” (Makumbi, 2014, p. 320). Zaya instead of being a patriarchal wife, prefers to be the servant of Kintu’s family and maintains her life there so that she compromises the honor that the society would give her as a wife with a relative freedom as servant because she practically enjoys some freedom in Kintu’s house since she engages in outdoor activities with Kintu’s male servants. Nevertheless, what she has refused is not a man but oppressive wifehood for she is forced to marry Gitta whom she does not love. Having no interest in Gitta, she declines to sleep with him, but she later enjoys sex with the young man Baale and bears a child to the royal family so that her son becomes Kintu’s grandchild.

Both Mazzi and Zaya are not like Western radical feminists who totally avoid men, but they can be taken as African feminists who believe in the importance of men, but negotiate with men to eradicate oppressive practices and thoughts against women. In other words, African feminists do not reject men; rather they prefer to negotiate with men to avoid women’s suppression as Mazzi rejects the household chores and prefers Baale to entertain her, and Zaya refuses oppressive marriage as she departs her husband while enjoying sexual life with Baale.

Additional instances of negotiation and compromise are seen through the post-colonial female character, Magda. She challenges both colonial and patriarchal subjugation of women, but she is not seen standing against polygamy or she never challenges her husband’s partiality. This justifies Ogunyemi’s argument in the interview with Arndt (2000) that states, in contemporary Africa even educated young women prefer to be married into polygamous families to avoid suppression that African women of colonial period had faced. As colonial modernity had compelled African women and men to be monogamous, women of the colonial time were burdened by household tasks for the polygamy institution that would help them to reduce the domestic chores had been

condemned as a backward practice by the colonial power. Nevertheless, post-colonial African women seek to restore such traditions of marriage. Even though the educational background of Magda is not mentioned in the novel, she is a well-informed woman about culture, colonialism and patriarchy. Magda's tolerance of her partial husband seems to mean that she uses the polygamy marriage as a way of lessening household duties as well as she maintains her power of leading the house in his absence. This is due to the fact that in many polygamous institutions of Africa, "usually, boundaries of marked spaces are respected;...each wife lives in her own house with her children; the man is responsible for the general welfare, maintenance, and operation of his compound while each wife is directly responsible for her children" (Nnaemeka, 2005, p. 173). Magda's silence concerning her husband's partiality implies that she takes her relatively independent house for that she is more responsible than her husband as a compromise.

4.1.5 Subverting Christianity

African feminists consider Christianity as a colonial heirloom so that they disparage it for strengthening patriarchal maltreatment of African women (Okome, 2003). Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) identifies the legacy of colonialism as one of the six mountains on African women's back that maintain patriarchal oppression. Colonial ideology facilitated the perception that African women should get male approval for their appearances, comportments and deeds. One of the means by which the colonial aftermath underpins patriarchal domination in Africa is through the discourses of Christianity. Christian teaching upholds patriarchal rules and norms as well it typically construes women as inferior by nature and demand them to be submissive to men. Such teaching grants male the right to possess women and decide on their wills and fates (Shodhganga, 2013; Stratton, 1994). Hence, Christian religious leaders play important roles in persuading society to obey patriarchal rules. Since religious leaders have been feared and respected, the followers of the religion obey their commands.

Nonetheless, in *Kintu,* the female character, Magda, fights against patriarchal imposition that is informed by Christianity arguing that Christian discourses created borderlines between men and women. She practically subverts Christianity because she prefers a heathen life refusing a name given by her Christian father:

> Magda was heathen because she had defied her father. She had refused to be confirmed in church with the name Magdalene…Instead he offered to name her Victoria, a beautiful name, which was not yet common in Uganda. But Magda would not have it either…Then Magda had named herself Mukisa and asked the family to call her Blessing if they wanted an English version. But the family agreed that she was far from a blessing. In retaliation, Magda took Mukisa in its heathen form, Bweeza. The end result was not surprising; Magda fell away from the church and was living a heathen life (Makumbi, 2014, p. 183).

In patriarchal tradition, girls fully submit themselves to the interest of their fathers, and fathers decide on the fate of their daughters including who they should marry; what religion they should follow. Patriarchal attitudes are also found in Christianity and these have fortified African women's suppression by men (Okome, 2003). In contrast, Magda challenges such imposition made on her both by her father and by church. Resisting the compulsory name that she does not want to be called, she chooses to lead a heathen life; that is she prefers not to be embraced in the Christian church. As a result, she deconstructs the patriarchal and Christian tradition by giving herself a name of her interest. Besides, Magda argues that Christianity is a system of colonization when she narrates to Ruth how their family ancestors became Christian:

> Magda told Ruth about their ancestor, Nekemeya, the first Christian in the family who became a teacher. But ask yourself, Magda said, How was he a teacher around the 1890s? Christianity arrived in 1877: thirteen years later Nekemeya was a teacher? Sometimes I fear that we descend from the very first Ganda to sell the nation to the white man (Makumbi, 2014, pp. 188-189).

Magda understands that colonizers brought fake Christianity to Africa as a cunning system through which they maintained and expanded colonialism. She contends that white colonizers trained black indigenous people in a way that helped them achieve their mission of colonization in the name of religion. As a result, she questions the way Nekemeya becomes a teacher within short period. In other words, if Christianity is truly for religious (spiritual) purpose, it is impossible for one to be a good religious teacher with the education of less than thirteen years. Hence, in Magda's view Western Christianity is one of the residuals of colonialism that destroyed the life and traditions of Uganda's Ganda society. Because white men who draw a boundary between man

and woman as well as between white colonizers and black colonized brought Christianity to Africa, it cannot discourse truth and equality. It is this skepticism that has directed her to restrain herself from the religion that has been transferring from her family ancestors to her generation since Western missionaries introduced Christianity to Africa, so Magda deconstructs Christianity.

In addition, from the action of another woman character, Faisi who is an African convent Christian, it is possible to conclude that the colonial Christianity is not based on truth. In support of this point, Faisi lies to receive people's attention when she preaches. "I was a slut…I preferred married men…I aborted three of my unborn babies. Eventually, I settled down with one married man. But God punished me. I couldn't have children…I killed his wife's children" (Makumbi, 2014, p. 164). Faisi designs such a false story to convince people to accept Christianity. Later we learn from the novel that the previously mentioned story of Faisi is a fabricated one when the narrator states, "Faisi had never killed anyone. Kanani was the only man she had known her entire life" (Makumbi, 2014, p. 167). This implies that such discourse is intended to deceive people in order to let them drop their indigenous spirituality and thus embrace the imported Christianity. In this relation, Palmer (2013) posits that an artificial Christian consecration disguises wickedness and deficiency of honest Christian contributions.

Moreover, Faisi is portrayed as one who cannot control her lust when she forces Kanani to have sex, but an awakened person is not allowed to have sex in order to acquire a certain level of sanctity during fasting or prayer time. "When Faisi said that they should abstain, he did. But then came nights when Faisi would get restless...After a while, having failed to sleep, Faisi would whisper wistfully, maybe I don't know. Maybe we can, as long as you don't go very deep" (Makumbi, 2014, p. 168). This quotation reinforces that Faisi's attachment to Christianity is based on uncertainty because if she had truly believed in the doctrines of the religion and had the objective to get eternal life, she should have committed herself to the demands of the religion.

Briefly, using the skeptical female character, Magda and the ambiguous character Faisi, Makumbi unveils the main intention of the colonially imported Christianity. Beyond confusing the life of the African convents, Christianity has been systematic way of devaluing indigenous cultural traditions while upholding the colonial legacy beginning from the time when colonialism happened to the post-independent neo-colonial period of the African continent.

4.1.6 Women and Cultural Renovation

African feminism embraces African societies' institutions, which are of value to women, and rejects those, which work to their disadvantage in a way that does not simply import Western women's agendas (Gatwiri & McLaren, 2016). Nnaemeka (2003) maintains that African traditional "culture should not be dismissed as a negative or neutral factor in development; rather, attempts should be made to find out in what ways culture is a positive force that can serve development well" (p. 375). African feminist thought does not seek to abandon tradition, but it aims to enable cultural traditions to adapt to their times in ways that destabilize patriarchal structures and bring improvement and synchronization while maintaining favorable cultural identity and pride. It aims to destabilize patriarchal structures and to change the post-colonial outrageous conditions of Africa (Nnaemeka, 2003; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994; Ogunyemi, 1985).

In accordance with the above claim, Makumbi urges the need for cultural transformation in many ways. For example, while striving to retain indigenous traditions of the Ganda people, Magda seeks to transform women suppressive elements of that culture in her conversation with Kalema or Paulo. She argues, "You belong to your mother's family in ways you might never know. This is why I am angry that they're not allowing daughters' children at the family reunion" (Makumbi, 2014, p. 216). Kalema/ Paulo is the son of Kanani's daughter Ruth so that he has no right to participate in Kintu's family reunion as the tradition forbids. Here, it is possible to say that Magda needs the tradition, but she prefers such tradition should be transformed into one that embraces women and their children as part of a clan tree. She underlines this point when she claims, "Our branch of the clan is headed by a fool just because he's a man" (Makumbi, 2014, p. 350). This indicates that maleness should not be taken as an absolute criterion for leadership; rather the person's capacity has to be critically considered regardless of his/her sex.

Magda desires to alter the male privileging tradition while continuing her ancestral cultural tradition since she "grabbed every opportunity to pass on scraps of family history" (Makumbi, 2014, p. 188). Thus, Magda while condemning suppressive features of the tradition, strives to transfer her traditional values to new generations as she narrates the ancestral curse to Ruth and this agrees with African feminists' consideration of women as proper transmitters of traditional African culture and spirituality to their newer generations. Moreover, as it has been discussed under 4.1.1, the Ganda tradition exhibits patriarchal domination of women relegating them to

object position. On the other hand, Makumbi (2014) also claims the need for transforming such views of women through male characters. For instance, an educated male character Isaac marries a woman to be a complete man.

> Isaac had come to the conclusion that he might as well keep her as his madam because she was as good as any other woman. He felt as much affection for her as he would ever feel for a woman and he liked the respectability that came with saying that there was a woman at home (Makumbi, 2014, pp. 268-269).

In contrast to Western feminism, African feminism views maleness and femaleness as binary complementarity rather than binary opposites. Either male or female is incomplete body independently (Nnaemeka, 2003). With this assumption, Isaac honors his wife as a source of pride because he knows that without women, men are incomplete regardless of their economic and social status. Isaac is a well-known Engineer who owns a car, shop, grocery and leads a luxurious life, but he thinks that he is not a complete man unless he gets married to the woman. Thus, Isaac is a socially transformed man who bids respect to women. Likewise, another male character, Miisi has optimistic and respectful views towards women when he wants to talk to his wife, Nnattu. He says, "Sit with your husband and tell him stories like a good wife" (Makumbi, 2014, p. 305). Unlike patriarchal husbands who consider their wives as unintellectual and foolish (Ezeaku, 2014; Tyson, 2006), Miisi recognizes his wife's intellectual competence of narrating pleasant and educative stories so that he regards his wife as a complementary partner who suffices his life rather than subordinate unintellectual being as perceived in patriarchal wifehood.

Furthermore, Miisi suggests making Magda the leader of the clan instead of Kanani as the narrator says, "Miisi had told her that he would sooner forget custom and install her as the elder but the rest of the elders had refused" (Makumbi, 2014, p. 350). Kanani embraces Western Christianity so that he is not fit to display the quality that the tradition expects from a clan leader. Despite being woman, Magda better exhibits such leadership qualities so that Miisi strives to negotiate with the male-centered tradition that it should leave its masculine requirement as clan leader considering Magda's potential as a compromise. In other words, Miisi understands women's potential to do whatever men do, and thus he supports women's equality and liberation. This underscores Ogundipe-Leslie's (1994) and Ogunyemi's (1985) concern for transforming men to the level where they change their patriarchal mind and support women's equality and freedom.

4.1.7 Motherhood and Kinship Responsibility

In African feminism, all-rounded commitment of African women (mothers) in order to solve their kinfolks' or relatives' as well as their community's problems has been regarded as a vital aspect of African womanhood (Phillips, 2006). This shows that African women are kinship connectors. *Kintu* also underpins this point. For instance, the female character, Nnamata searches for Isaac's father who put her in problems recognizing the role of kinship relations:

> She had not fully decided who Mr. Kintu was to her now the man who destroyed her future or Isaac's father…When Isaac brought a pregnant woman to his house, Nnamata realized that whatever the circumstances of Mr. Kintu, Isaac needed to know his roots as he was starting a family (Makumbi, 2014, pp. 271-272).

Mr. Kintu is a mathematics teacher who rapes his clever student Nnamata. Because of this rape, Nnamata becomes pregnant and thus drops out of school as well as her future dreams vanish. Despite her wound, she seeks him for he is the father of her only son. As soon as the rape has been committed, Mr. Kintu is put in jail and consequently becomes mentally ill. However, Nnamata strives to meet him with his son realizing that even if a father does not properly shoulder his fatherly responsibility he should be in touch. This is because in many African cultures, a woman lives for her child (Nnaemeka, 2005) and kinship affinity between a man and a woman that is once created through bearing children endures throughout their lives even if the spouses are separated. In addition, African mothers are not only mothers of their children but also mothers of their husbands and their society (Ezeaku, 2014). Nnamata wants to retain the Ganda culture that considers men as the main root of family (Matlawe, 2003); whereas she gets Mr. Kintu prisoned for raping her. In other words, even if a man oppresses a Ganda woman, the woman does not totally ignore man's role; rather she prefers to tolerate and compromise by recognizing man's importance in family life while exposing him to punishment when he oppresses her.

Similarly, Magda fulfills her motherhood (womanhood) and kinship-connecting obligation when she helps Kanani's daughter Ruth who has an unexpected pregnancy. Although her cousin Kanani abandons Magda as she becomes heathen, she is excited when she sees him. Kanani has never visited her and this visit is not paid to restore the lost kinship solidarity rather to solve his problem. Nevertheless, "as soon as they arrived, she fed Ruth and put her to bed" (Makumbi, 2014, p. 195).

This suggests that Magda gives priority to kinship solidarity rather than blaming Kanani for departing her because of her refusal to submit her rights and interest to the patriarchal and religious subjugations. By this means, Magda has been treating Ruth until she goes back to her parents' home after giving birth to a baby boy. If Magda had counted benefit from Kanani, she would have not helped Ruth for Kanani is not good to her.

Nevertheless, she provides all rounded assistance to Ruth because she knows that she should maintain kinship solidarity. Through Nnamata and Magda, Makumbi (2014) conveys that women are tolerant and committed to hold kinship responsibility regardless of their contextual relations and communication with their relatives. On the other hand, another woman character, Faisi who is deeply immersed in Western Christianity undermines the Ganda kinship solidarity. This is reflected in the novel when Faisi talks to Kanani's uncle who tells her about the death of Kanani's relative. In response, Faisi says, "We don't have relations that don't walk in Christ. Don't come back here telling us there's this funeral rite or that death" (Makumbi, 2014, p. 197). Although it is obligatory for a member of a clan to see and help each other during both happy and sad times and women are very sensitive on such occasions in the Ganda culture (Amolo, 2017; Matlawe, 2003), Faisi fails to reflect the attribute of African womanhood since she rejects kinship solidarity.

Besides, Faisi is unable to welcome her grandson or Ruth's baby so that "Ruth was shocked by Faisi's distance and lack of interest in the baby" (Makumbi, 2014, p. 201). African mothers' happiness is limitless when their sons or daughters bear children, but Faisi cannot properly display this compassion. Through Faisi, Makumbi ironically conveys that womanhood or motherhood in an African context requires good personality that enables children to grow up taking their mothers as role models. A mother who possesses the required attribute is a source of pride for her children; whereas, the mother who does not acquire desirable personality is a source of humiliation for her children. For that reason, women like Faisi who are deeply immersed in Western worldviews are not able to handle motherly responsibility, which African feminists consider as one of the important qualities that African womanhood necessitates.

In summary, Makumbi (2014) has dealt with multiple sources of women's suppression beginning from the pre-colonial Buganda tradition to post-colonial Uganda's context. In doing so, the novelist has created women characters representing women of Uganda both in pre-colonial and post-colonial periods. In both eras, there are brilliant and resistant female characters despite the

fact that there are also weak and submissive women characters in the novel. Overall, *Kintu* uncovers and deconstructs problems related with patriarchy, colonialism, post-colonial poverty along with maintaining traditional cultural values of African people.

4.2 Synopsis of *Hiding in Plain Sight* (2014)

Somalia had been colonized by three European colonizers who divided the nation into three such as Italian Somalia, French Somaliland, and British Somaliland. In 1960, Somalia got dependence and Aden Abdullah Osman Daar became the first president, but he was succeeded by Ali Shermarke upon losing the 1967 election. However, in 1969 Siad Barre overthrew Shermarke by a bloody coup and maintained a dictatorial government until 1991. As Barre failed to stand against his opponents, he fled and the country fell in to civil war and now Al-Shabab, an Islamic military group has been fighting against the weak government. Even though United Nations, United States of America and African Union have been supporting the Somali Government against Al-Shabab, still the country suffers from such civil war and is considered a failed state (Furlow, 2013).

Farah's novel, *Hiding in Plain Sight* deals with problems of the Somali people due to Al-Shabab and particularly, it explores how women are hurt and flee into exile for the lack of peace and security. Third person omniscient narrator recounts stories in the novel. The novel begins with an assassination of a Somali man Aar, who works in Somali's capital Mogadishu as the United Nations' logistics officer. Aar has been saddened for his wife Valerie, who bears two children to him (Dahaba and Salif), abandons him because she is engaged with a Uganda born an Indian woman called Padmini in homosexual love. His two children learn in a Nairobi boarding school, but unfortunately he is killed by Al-Shabab on Mogadishu in his way to fly to Nairobi after receiving a death-threatening message. After receiving Aar's death message, his only sister Bella, who is a famed fashion photographer in Rome moves to Nairobi to look after his two children.

After that, Bella is informed that Valerie is imprisoned in Uganda for committing a homosexual act with Padmini, and through Aar's coworker, a Swedish woman, Gunilla, Bella releases Valerie and her partner and helps them to travel to Nairobi. Valerie and Padmini move to Nairobi and meet Bella and the children. With the help of Gunilla, whom Aar trusts most and keeps his essential documents including details of his bank accounts and his most recent will with her, Bella settles her right to take care of Aar's children and to own his property as per Aar's will. Being

denied her maternal right for she is married to Aar out of community of property, Valerie with her partner, Padmini, goes to India.

4.2.1 Resistance to Patriarchy

One of the common issues of African feminism is the need for social transformation to liberate women from patriarchal oppression and harmful practices. Many African traditional cultures are patriarchal and women have been subjugated. Particularly, the Somali patriarchal suppression of women has been maintained by the conservative Islamic tradition that induces women to fully submit themselves to serve men (Feven, 2009; Furlow, 2013).

Hiding in Plain Sight states that there exist women oppressive ideology and practices in contemporary Somalia and Kenya and calls for social transformation as "in Somalia, a woman is not thought of as a complete person in her own right. She has become male society's project in the making…The same is true of Kenyan society, in fact, more so than in Somali society" (Farah, 2014, p. 239). In this excerpt, the young boy, Salif criticizes patriarchal oppression of women both in his home country Somalia and in Kenya where he lives in exile. Salif's complaint indicates that he wants to see African societies free from women oppressing practices although he practically shows his superiority over his sister which I will discuss later. In addition, another male character, Cadde, who is a Muslim Somali man "is advisedly moderate in his ways, never openly condemning the young Somali women who work in the office and move about with their heads uncovered" (Farah, 2014, p. 10). This implies that men support women's freedom and this is the reason that African feminists seek to enable both men and women to stand against women repressive ideologies and practices.

The protagonist of the novel, Bella also criticizes women oppressive ideologies and practices in Somalia. Thus, "not only as a woman but also as a Somali woman, she has had to defy harsh social conditioning to establish herself as a person equal in all respects to a man" (Farah, 2014, p. 42). Bella endeavors to grow Salif as a transformed man who believes in women's equality:

> Bella sees where he is going with this joke and berates him for not keeping the promise he'd made regarding his treatment of his sister. Where does he get this macho thing, which is nothing like Aar? Helping Salif to grow into a young man who treats women with due respect is going to be work (Farah, 2014, p. 142).

Salif practically subjugates his sister though he ideally criticizes women oppressive traditions as it has been seen above so that Bella plans to change his behavior towards women. Bella's resistance to patriarchal subjugation of women begins with upbringing young boys like Salif in a way they should accept women's equality and dignity in contrast to patriarchal projection. If every family member in a given society is committed to bring up his/her children in a manner that the children respect to and believe in women's freedom and equality, it is possible to create a transformed society that stands against women domineering practices and thoughts.

Besides, Dahaba herself clearly knows that being a male, Salif oppresses her when she says, "My brother always steals my best ideas and passes them off as his own" (Farah, 2014, p. 280). Whenever Salif hears sound idea from Dahaba, he immediately declares it as if his own before her. In line with this, Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) argues that in post-colonial Africa when women produce good ideas, men use them without acknowledging women so that such theft has kept women at the backdoor in overall development endeavors of the continent. Here, the young girl, Dahaba seems to resist her brother's robing of her idea, not in an arrogant way, but systematically disclosing Salif's wrong deed in front of the family members. Through Dahaba, Farah motivates women to stand against their suppression on every occasion they encounter patriarchal oppression so that they can bring social transformation. Briefly, Farah echoes African feminist notion of family centered struggle to bring social transformation where women maintain their equality with men.

Farah also seems to posit that social transformation can be brought through proper education, which is the key to emancipate women from harmful cultural practices. For instance, Bella and Dahaba are saved from genital mutilation because of their parents' education as Bella states, "My mother spared me that" (Farah, 2014, p. 283). Similarly, Dahaba is saved by her father and Valerie says, "Aar spared our daughter" (Farah, 2014, p. 283). Both Hurdo and Aar are educated and because of the awareness they received from school, they protect their respective daughter from female genital mutilation, which is commonly practiced in Somali tradition. This indicates that through proper education, it is possible to bring social transformation where women subjugating ideologies and practices are condemned and distracted. Both socially transformed men and women devotedly help women's emancipation. Besides, it is also strong belief of African feminism that through education, women can be self-reliant and economically independent. Women need to get education so as to achieve proper empowerment that enables them to be self-confident and reliant

in all directions. Farah's portrayal of Bella meets this point. Bella is a progressive character who possesses most of the qualities that African feminists' claim:

> She knows that she is in a more privileged position than the vast majority of women. She is economically independent, she has a profession in which she is well respected, she knows what she is passionate about, and she has friends on whom she can rely. She has had the run of her own affairs for much of her life, and it is not only in her nature but also in her means to withdraw unequivocally from any situation where she is not treated with the dignity she deserves (Farah, 2014, p. 219).

Women have the capacity to be self-reliant in all directions if they get proper education. Bella is a Somali woman where women are oppressed by deep-rooted patriarchal and conservative Muslim culture, lack of democracy and deficiency of peace and security (Furlow, 2013). Nevertheless, because she is from the educated family and her own education as well, Bella is a very confident woman who does not suffer from economic problem for she acquires a good profession, which is her economic means unlike her counterparts in Somalia and elsewhere in Africa. Although Bella believes that life is threatening to women, she is assertive to fight against it with the hope that "there is glory in grief" (Farah, 2014, p. 38). Bella is an optimist and free of all kind of dependency and subordinations so that she can handle any difficulty by herself.

Bella wishes to see Africa a very convenient democratic place to all human beings. "In Bella's mind, freedoms are a package, so the freedoms denied daily to millions of citizens in Africa or the Middle East are bound up with the lack of democracy in these parts of the world" (Farah, 2014, p. 32). Bella's view of freedom underscores African feminists' endeavor to gain all rounded liberty in order to get rid of women oppressive practices and ideologies. Unless democracy is granted, it is impossible to unshackle women and their societies as a whole from oppression.

4.2.2 Women's Resistance to Islamic Oppression

African feminism considers Islamic religion as un-African faith and convicts it for maintaining patriarchal domination of women as Christianity does (Ogunyemi, 1985; Stratton, 1994). Somalia is one of the African nations in which conservative Islamic tradition suppresses women and as in any African Muslim society, Somali women's lives and experiences are molded by the doctrines of Shariah (Adamu, 2006; Feven, 2009; Furlow, 2013). Nonetheless, in *Hiding in Plain Sight*,

Bella's mother Hurdo seems to modify the Somali's conservative Islamic tradition. For instance, she makes sexual relation with a Christian white man Fiori without breaking her marriage affair with her homeland Muslim man, Digaaleh. "Marcella's connection with Bella, in that she was among the few who knew of Hurdo's affair with Giorgio Fiori, a Dante scholar on the faculty of letters, and she suspected that Bella was Giorgio's child even before it was confirmed" (Farah, 2014, p. 15). Digaaleh is the husband of Hurdo, but he has been impotent and thus Hurdo makes secret sexual relation with Giorgio Fiori who came to Somalia after liberation to lecture in Somali University. Hurdo deviates from the Muslim tradition that forbids women to have affairs with non-Muslim men. Besides, Hurdo breaks the Islamic principle that orders women to be loyal to one husband while it allows men to enjoy sexual life with more than one woman. Moreover, Bella's desire to have three lovers (each is intended to fill her varied need) shows an intention of destabilizing such religious informed patriarchal tradition:

> Bella had evolved her fantasy. She would have three lovers, she decided: one of them very, very handsome; another (with whom she would have at least one child) who was very, very intelligent; and for the third, she would choose a stud a well-hung partner with whom she would enjoy sex (Farah, 2014, p. 49).

In many African patriarchal cultures as well as in Islam, men are allowed to have more than one wife or sex partner since both allow male polygamy, whereas women are strictly prohibited to do so (Cherop, 2015; Nnaemeka, 2005). However, Bella deconstructs patriarchy and Islamic dogma since she realizes her dream when she meets three lovers (One Brazilian of African descent, one Kenyan and one Malian) each serves her specific desire as intended in her dream. This indicates that she is free of any oppression to fulfill her personal interest. Although she has three partners, her desire to have children also agrees with the African feminists concern; that is, African feminists such as (Kolawole, 2004; Nnaemeka, 2003; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994; Ogunyemi, 1985) believe in heterosexual relationship that they regard as only natural means to get children. Unlike Western feminists who totally want to avoid men from their sexual life, Bella considers men as an important partner who can satisfy her sexual needs. African feminists' struggle is not to act like men or to be antagonistic to men, but rather to fight against patriarchal oppression through recognition of the importance of men in their lives (Alkali et al., 2013). All the more, Bella fights for making independent decisions on the religion she seeks to embrace:

> Yes, she is a secularist, no more than culturally Muslim. But with a mother born and raised a Muslim and a father born in Italy to Catholic parents and brought up a Christian, she believed she had the undisputed authority to choose her faith. In her youth, growing up in a Muslim country, she embraced her mother's faith. But she no longer thinks of herself as a true Muslim (Farah, 2014, pp. 22-23).

Even though Bella is grown up in a culturally Muslim society, she knows that she has the right to choose her own religion without the influence of her parents. However, Digaaleh, who counts himself as Bella's father, forces her to be a conservative Muslim and protests her engagement in a modeling profession arguing that "Bella as Somali and therefore Muslim and Muslims don't go into modeling or exploit their image in exchange for cash" (Farah, 2014, p. 46). As Digaaleh is a conservative Muslim, he compels Bella to submit herself to the rule of the religion that forbids her to work on modeling because in Islam modeling is considered as a sin. In contrast, Bella struggles to be free of restriction "and she was determined to make her own way in the world, working hard and doing well in whatever profession she chose" (Farah, 2014, p. 49). Bella's capacity to decide freely on her choice of interest also subverts Western feminists' postulation that African women are fully subjugated and they are incapable of deciding on their interest and preference of life (Nnaemeka, 2005). By creating self-reliant female characters like Bella, Farah (2014) disproves the celebrated wrong depiction of women in Western feminist discourses.

Supporting Bella's freedom, her mother, Hurdo argues against Digaaleh "seeing his reaction as that of a typical Somali father and knowing he could do nothing to stop Bella from pursuing her heart's pleasure, while earning good money to boot" (Farah, 2014, p. 46). Hurdo encourages Bella's struggle to be free of patriarchal interference while choosing her own religion and profession that makes her feel happy and earn desirable income. Thus, she protests Digaaleh's patriarchal thought in her argument that "Bella was indeed a free person, able to make her own choices in life, and that no one had the right to impose their cultural or religious dictates on her" (Farah, 2014, p. 46). This indicates that as an empowered mother, Hurdo seeks to deconstruct both patriarchy and Muslim cultural traditions that give absolute power to fathers to decide on the wills and destinies of their children, particularly of their daughters. This kind of resistance contributes much in changing and transforming oppressive cultural views and practices towards women. In

short, in addition to exposing suppressive Islamic cultural traditions of Somali, Farah shows that woman suppressive culture has been steadily transformed into what is friendly to women folks.

4.2.3 Motherhood as Moral Nurturer

Begum (2016) identifies that "the three great principles of Black African ethics are life, force and unity, because of which one's mother, the origin of life, is sacred and enjoys unlimited respect and veneration in African society" (p. 89). Nevertheless, in order to achieve such status, a mother should always be close to her children and properly offer maternal care and love regardless of her personal interest and whatever difficulty she encounters in life (Nnaemeka, 2005). This is also vividly depicted in *Hiding in Plain Sight*. Valerie's ignorance of motherly responsibility and engagement in homosexual activity contradicts with African feminists' notion of motherhood. She deviates from African motherhood tradition in which any mother is expected to provide selfless protection and nurturing to her children.

Even though Valerie argues that since she is the only parent of her two children and seeks to take care of them, Bella contemplates that "you call yourself a parent? Not to these children you aren't, and you haven't been for many years" (Farah, 2014, p. 109). This is because Valerie deserts her children irresponsibly following her own personal interest as she is engaged in lesbian relationships with Padmini. Bella takes the responsibility of her brother's children because of Valerie's failure to discharge her maternal duty. Thus, Bella comes to Nairobi not to compete with Valerie to inherit the possessions of her deceased brother, but to bring up Salif and Dahaba in a responsible way that Valerie fails to do with realization that mothering requires limitless sacrifice:

> She remembers a Somali saying something to the effect that one's children are not one's parents. Which means, in effect, that we think far more often about our children than they are likely to think of us. Even if you are sick or having money problems or other troubles, she realizes, you must not expect them to respond to your needs in the way you've responded to theirs (Farah, 2014, p. 81).

In many African cultures, mothering is associated with love, tolerance and sacrifice that any mother bears to her children (Nnaemeka, 2005; Orjinta, 2013). As the above extract shows, Bella agrees with the notion of mothering in Somali culture that is perceived as endless sacrifice paid by parents (mothers), and at the same time, it is the only gift that does not require payback. Even

though Bella does not have a child, she wants to bring up children in an ethical manner while Valerie is reluctant. Bella thinks that mothers have obligation to teach their children good morals when she debates with Valerie concerning Salif's theft which Valerie considers smartness. Bella is annoyed by Valerie's encouragement of Salif's disloyalty when she angry replies, "I don't want my nephew to steal from anyone at any time...Thieving small things is morally wrong because one may develop the habit of stealing bigger things" (Farah, 2014, p. 124). Bella properly understands the concept of motherhood that demands every mother to nurture her children by teaching good conduct, and when they get out of accepted behavior, she should criticize or even punish them until they acquire good conduct so that Bella reinforces that "Salif must know how to distinguish right from wrong. And now is the time to teach him, during these tender years" (Farah, 2014, p. 123). Bella properly realizes that child nurturing should commence from early childhood stage so that the child grows up by identifying morally and culturally right things from wrong ones.

Bella is always watchful when she observes negative things on Dahaba too. "Bella reminds herself to have a set made for Dahaba, who has never been trusted with keys because she has a habit of mislaying them. But Bella intends to make Dahaba more responsible for herself" (Farah, 2014, p. 196). In similar manner she strives to correct Salif's infidelity, Bella also seeks to adjust bad behaviors of her brother's daughter, Dahaba. This indicates that Bella has motherhood qualities so that she endeavors to exhibit African women's attribute of nurturing children based on the moral values of their societies. Bella inherits this motherly quality from her mother, Hurdo because Hurdo has been using similar methods while nurturing Aar:

> Hurdo was aware that life couldn't go on like this forever, with the three of them continually in one another's hair, and she knew she would have to put a stop to some of Aar's boyish mischief. In self-admonishment, she repeated to herself the Somali proverb that a parent must refrain from showing her smiling teeth to her children lest her children start showing their naked bums. Gradually, she began to introduce some order into their lives (Farah, 2014, p. 44).

Hurdo clearly recognizes parents' obligation in shaping their children's behavior from the very beginning when she immediately corrects Aar's naughtiness. She does this based on the principle of Somali tradition as she usually quotes the Somali proverb. Yet, Hurdo is not an autocratic

parent towards her children because she clearly understands that the way Somalis raise their children is oppressive so that she wants to modify such tyranny as she listens to her child Aar:

> Aar, in turn, was lucky to be raised by Hurdo, who not only tolerated differences between people but also appreciated them. Aar's playmates would be beaten at home by their parents if they talked back and the children seldom got a kind answer if they questioned an adult. In such a household, a child inevitably resorts to lying, sneaking around, and being evasive (Farah, 2014, p. 195).

This citation enables us to realize how Hurdo endeavors to transform the oppressive tradition of Somali child nurturing while embracing the promising ones. In other words, she uses the strategy of Somali tradition when she corrects Aar's misbehavior depending on the people's wisdom that is expressed through their proverbs. At the same time, she wants to be democratic when she allows Aar to freely express his idea, which has been totally prohibited to children in the tradition of Somalis. This is because Hurdo realizes that the autocratic way of parenting has many disadvantages as the children grown in such conditions do not develop self-confidence and are encouraged to lie for they fear their parents' negative rewards.

Due to Hurdo's effective nurturing, Aar develops good personality so that he has been described throughout the novel as loyal, responsible, caring, and determinant towards his family as well as to his friends. For instance, "Fatima says, If marriage is heaven and hell, then Aar was heaven where he now must be residing, and his widow if she is entitled to such an office, which I doubt is hell" (Farah, 2014, p. 207). In the view of the Somali woman character, Fatima, Aar fulfills all the criteria that a good husband possesses, but Valerie as a wife lacks the qualities that Aar owns because of cultural differences (Valerie grows up in Britain and Aar in Somalia) as well the ways each has been nurtured by parents differs. As Hurdo is a committed mother, she has been very close to her child and has shaped his attitude towards women and hence Aar becomes wise and respectful husband despite Valerie's failure to maintain the marriage affair.

Moreover, the author of the novel emphasizes that mothering requires a very committed practical guidance and careful personal life that should be a model for raising children. Bella underlines this when she states that "there is an ancient wisdom, I believe, which purports that a mother can teach her child only the good morals by which she abides" (Farah, 2014, p. 124). Here, Bella argues that

mothers should not only teach but also need to show to the children practically by fulfilling the accepted moral values and departing from the bad ones in their day-to-day life. In support of this, Yunusy (2015) states that in African feminism, motherhood is perceived as ethical transmission that has been molded by socio-cultural situations of a given society. Motherhood is understood in African feminism beyond giving birth to a child; it requires selfless commitment of a woman in accordance with the non-oppressive standard socio-cultural values of a given African society.

However, Valerie never meets this requirement and therefore she cannot be a good model to her children. This is why Bella condemns her that "the woman is clearly insane. Look at her, dressed as though she were on her way to a Bollywood party. Beware of the middle-aged woman who doesn't behave or think like one!" (Farah, 2014, p. 109). According to Bella, Valerie's dressing style is out of the Somali cultural context so that it cannot be exemplary to newer generations of the society including her children. Valerie's son, Salif also annoyingly describes her "unpardonable rudeness, of a piece with her generally undignified attitude toward others" (Farah, 2014, p. 144). Consequently, Valerie fails to concur with African feminists' requirement that calls upon every African woman and her society to maintain the culture of politeness and respectfulness in struggling against women's oppression (Nnaemeka, 2003; Ogunyemi, 1985).

4.2.4 Family Centeredness

African feminism embraces family centeredness and kinship solidarity. One's commitment to solve problems of family members and relatives has been taken as one of the prominent principles of African feminism (Phillips, 2006). This notion is accentuated in *Hiding in Plain Sight* in many ways. For example, Aar is dedicated to educate his half-sister, Bella:

> He had an older brother's protectiveness and affection for her...helping with her studies (she was bad at mathematics and science). He'd encouraged her interest in photography; in fact, he bought her first camera and sat for her as she began to master her art (Farah, 2014, p. 16).

Aar supports Bella to achieve her dream of life. His provision is extended even in finding out her talent and encouraging her to develop interest in a profession that he thinks she can perform best. In Africa, particularly in Somalia where strict patriarchal culture and religion dominate, girls are not encouraged to learn (Feven, 2009; Furlow, 2013). Conversely, Aar has discharged his

brotherly responsibility since he empowers Bella to obtain best profession even though he knows that Bella is a lazy student. This is the reason why African feminists endeavor to build collaborative relationship between men and women to solve all rounded problems of women. The support that Aar gives to Bella is not one way that any patriarchal society thinks that women are weak and need provision from men, but it is the two-way cooperation. Bella is also committed to handle the responsibility of nurturing Aar's children in his absence. Bella's decision to take care of her brother's children leaving her comfortable life in Rome and coming to face challenges in Nairobi shows her commitment to handle family responsibility that:

> She has never forgotten the assistance and love he provided to her when she was a young girl growing up. Now it is her turn to give him and his children all the devotion they require, setting aside her own needs and desires (Farah, 2014, p. 25).

Bella's struggle to bring up her deceased brother's children demonstrates that not only biological parents but also other family members as well as relatives should have a vital role in nurturing children. African feminists consider one's commitment to kinship solidarity as a basic principle for African women to gain collective outcomes; hence, an African feminist strives to solve the problems of her family and her community as a whole (Nnaemeka, 2005; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994; Ogunyemi, 1985). Bella takes this responsibility not because it is easy, but she knows from the very beginning that nurturing children alone in a foreign land is difficult; nonetheless, she decides to face any challenge "imagining the hard times ahead for which she must prepare" (Farah, 2014, p. 31). Thus, dropping her luxurious life in Rome, she comes to Nairobi to be both father and mother for her brother's children, and hence she decides to tackle whatever challenge she meets in Nairobi. Bella's decision to take care of her brother's children in his absence strongly maintains African feminists' notion of sister-brother (men-women) relationship instead of focusing only on sisterhood relationships on which Western radical feminist thought and principle relies.

Ogunyemi (1985) explains that in African feminism, the concept of family goes beyond the husband, wife and their offspring and includes other relatives or kinship. Farah advocates this concept when Bella extends her solidarity to Valerie as "she tells herself that she won't ever forgive herself if she does nothing to help Valerie, never mind the nature of the trouble the woman is in" (Farah, 2014, p. 56). Bella has been in a very miserable condition due to her brother's accidental death when she hears about Valerie's detention in Uganda for committing homosexual

act with Padmini; nevertheless, this difficult situation does not restrict Bella from helping her ex-sister-in law. Bella "has settled the attorney's fee and oiled enough corrupt police palms that Valerie and Padmini are in the process of gaining their freedom" (Farah, 2014, p. 61). Bella does this because Valerie bears two children to her brother even though she knows that the couples are separated before Aar's death. This is due to the fact that in Somali culture, it is mandatory for relatives to help each other during difficulties regardless of whatever attitude they have to each other. Bella shows her respect and commitment towards this Somali traditional value that necessitates relatives to be helpful to each other, which is also one of the African feminists' requirements of African womanhood.

4.2.5 Women and Decolonization

African feminism claims that African women's struggle should be grounded in African culture, and it condemns Western feminists' negative representation of African cultures. African feminists have entrenched affection to the continent and obey non-women oppressive cultural values while fighting against despotic ones, and therefore they strive to decolonize as they pay respect towards the continent and its cultures (Gatwiri & McLaren, 2016).

Farah in *Hiding in Plain Sight* underscores the above point when Bella reflects her view of colonialism and its effect on colonized women during her conversation with an Italian Daily Newspaper Journalist. "She talked about how the colonized Asians, Africans, North American Indians, and Australian aboriginals had been eroticized and trivialized by their colonizers" (Farah, 2014, p. 51). Hence, Bella clearly understands the evil effect of colonialism and its continuous form neo-colonialism. Through Bella, Farah condemns the way colonizers oppressed the colonized people in general and women in particular. Such oppression has never ended with the termination of colonial rule. In this neo-colonial period, Westerners, particularly Americans portray African-American people in a similar way that the former colonizers view African women. Bella maintains this saying, "Just as American photographers produced naked portraits of Native Americans or Africans for the tourist trade, women photographed in the nude were put to similar service" (Farah, 2014, p. 51). Bella has connected women's oppression with black people's repression by the dominant whites. This is the reason that African feminists include race related issues in their fight against women's oppression.

In addition, Farah deconstructs European tradition when the Uganda born Indian woman character, Padmini denounces Valerie's British culture as "the lifestyle in which she was raised is of the European British variety. Add to this her father's...infidelities, and his predatory sexual behavior, imposing himself on his young daughter" (Farah, 2014, p. 231). The female character, Valerie is born in Britain from a Nigerian mother and a British father. She inherits bad conduct from her British father and, she is not loyal to her partner. Another thing that we learn from this citation is that Valerie's father who is a British man cannot be a good model to his daughter. In contrast, the Somali male character, Aar is loyal to his deviant wife and a good model to his children.

Farah also refutes the colonial view of Western white women as civilized and African women as uncivilized in all directions (Okome, 2003) when Bella undermines a White Italian female minor character Marcella. "Marcella has always had to say the unspeakable in public, to ask the unanswerable in private. Marcella's questions remind Bella how little even educated Europeans know about Islam, let alone about Somalis and their culture" (Farah, 2014, p. 19). This implies that Bella is irritated for Europeans' negative perception of non-Western traditions in general and the Somali culture in particular. Bella's claim also deconstructs the celebrated oriental notion of the colonizers that put Europeans at the privileged center of wisdom while placing non-Europeans at the marginal positions.

Along with deconstructing Western viewpoints, Farah remarks the need for respect towards indigenous culture and identity. The female protagonist, Bella, loves Africa and proudly identifies herself as African. Her forced migration from Somalia first to a Kenyan refugee camp and then to Canada as well as her stable, peaceful and confortable life in Italy-Rome does not change her positive attitude towards Africa:

> She volunteers that she has missed Africa, missed the smell of night fires, the mellifluously tonal languages, and the calls of neighbors across a village courtyard after a day's hard work has left them too exhausted to bother with the formality of coming out of their homes. The driver asks, so you were born in Africa? Born and brought up a Somali, she says (Farah, 2014, pp. 39-40).

Bella has an inherent love and attachment to African cultures, life styles and languages as she reflects during her arrival at Nairobi from Rome. She confidently describes herself as a Somali

woman and she does not want to acknowledge her father's Italian identity since she thinks that "just because she is a bit light-skinned and has a father from elsewhere is not reason enough to deny her the Somali identity to which she has legal and natal rights" (Farah, 2014, p. 74). This connotes that although the political instability in Somalia affects her and her family and even takes the life of most loved brother, Bella still prefers to be Somali rather than an Italian where she leads stable and comfortable life. "She feels connected to the soul of the continent, even though she knows that, almost to a man or a woman, any African would say that she is not of them" (Farah, 2014, p. 74). It underpins how Bella's soul is intently attached with Africa. Although many Africans consider her as non-African because of her bright color, she identifies herself as purely African. Because Bella's father is an Italian, she has reason to connect herself to Europe as many people contemplate her to be, but she prefers the poor, politically unstable, and unsecured continent. Thus, Bella's concern and commitment to African people and their traditions has never been affected by the inconvenient situations of the continent.

Moreover, Bella knows and obeys the Nigerian Hausa culture when she reveals Aar's death to Valerie. "Bella remembers that the Hausa way of informing a relation living far away about the loss of a parent, a sibling, or another intimate is to send an emissary to deliver the news in person" (Farah, 2014, p. 20). Despite the fact that Valerie abandons Aar, Bella recognizes that the spouses remain connected for they bear children. Hence, she informs Valerie about Aar's death based on the Hausa tradition because Valerie's mother is a Hausa woman. Bella respects this culture of Africa in spite of her exposure to the Western world and her blood relationship with Italians from her father's part even though it is confidential.

Conversely, Valerie seems to reject African traditions even though she is married to the Somali man Aar as well as her mother is Nigerian Hausa origin who dwells in London. Bella criticizes that "Valerie, who was married to a Somali man and gave birth to children who are part Somali, has just demonstrated that she knows next to nothing about Somalis" (Farah, 2014, p. 132). Bella prefers Valerie to know and obey the Somali culture. As well, when Valerie talks about sex, "Bella, who was brought up in a tradition in which in-laws did not discuss certain taboo topics, told herself that Valerie had no sense of actual shame or privacy" (Farah, 2014, p. 124). This implies that Valerie does not have concern for Somali culture and hence she is characterized against the African feminist principle that demands women to be respectful to African cultures.

Nevertheless, Bella never tells her sexual matters to her beloved brother Aar. “As a young woman growing up in Somalia, she would never have told her brother about her “woman’s thing,” as close as they were” (Farah, 2014, p. 140). Even though Bella has sexual affairs with three men in different times and places, she does not talk about such an issue to her beloved brother, Aar. This is due to the fact that in some African cultures, sexual issues are not discussed openly with a relative or with a family member (Kambarami, 2006). As a whole, Bella’s attitude towards Africa and African indigenous culture in general and the Somali culture in particular, makes her an ideal character that fits with African feminists’ vision of creating an African woman who knows and respects positive African traditional cultures while struggling against oppressive ones (see Nnaemeka, 2003; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994).

4.2.6 Women and Homosexuality

One of the points that African feminism criticizes in Western feminism is that the latter accepts homosexuality as a means of fighting against women’s oppression. Hence, rejecting it, African feminists encourage heterosexual relations (Arndt, 2002). This is due to the fact that same-sex engagement is believed to be non-African, and thus it is a foreign import from either the decadent powerful West or the exotic spiritual East (Sivertsen, 2016). *Hiding in Plain Sight* shows that African countries, Kenya and Uganda are uncomfortable with people engaged in same-sex partnerships. Valerie, who is Aar’s wife and mother of Salif and Dahaba, has left her husband and two children as she becomes lesbian with Padmini.

Since Uganda is one of the African countries that legally ban homosexual relationship, “Valerie and Padmini have spent a night in a lockup in Kampala, Uganda, having been accused of engaging in illicit sex” (Farah, 2014, p. 29). These lesbian women’s action is strange even to Bella who has exposure to the Western world where same-sex relationship including homosexual marriage has been legalized by most nations. This is because “she discovered a strange text” (Farah, 2014, p. 29) that she received from Gunilla that informs her about imprisonment of Valerie and Padmini. Through assistance of Gunilla and Bella, these lesbian women move from Kampala to Nairobi after Bella gets “the right officers to bribe” (Farah, 2014, p. 56) in Kampala through a lawyer called Helene who has been following their case.

Likewise, in Kenya, homosexuality is banned and thus, such people do not lead stable lives. The discussion between Bella and Padmini shows difficulties of lesbians in Nairobi, Kenya. "Ulrika, the lesbian was in need of a place to hide from the police" (Farah, 2014, p. 324). Ulrika is in trouble not to be arrested for committing same-sex crime. This incident also leads Valerie and Padmini to be suspected by Kenyan Police and hence, they are again forced to leave the country in fear of custody. Indeed, the narrator points out that "here in Africa, where gays are victimized, harassed, and harangued, they could do with all the help they can get" (Farah, 2014, p. 324). This illustrates that African people and governments are not interested in homosexuality and thus do not tolerate people who practice it.

Moreover, in *Hiding in Plain Sight*, homosexuality is considered as both immoral and sinful by Muslims. The Somali Muslim tradition is not a convenient place for homosexuality as Padmini expresses her fear of punishment for being homosexual saying that "Somalis are bigots, every single one of them. They would delight in burning us at the stake. They see us as deviants, worse than devil worshippers, and they believe we deserve commensurate punishments" (Farah, 2014, p. 248). Here, Farah clearly shows that in an African context, same-sex relation is not only banned legally but also condemned by African cultural and religious institutions.

In brief, Farah in his latest novel, *Hiding in Plain Sight* deals with many issues of African feminism such as social transformation, subversion of patriarchal and religious motivated oppressions of women, qualities of motherhood, family centeredness and affinity and rejection of homosexuality. His female characters, particularly Hurdo and Bella are represented progressively in accordance with the principles of African feminism. These characters challenge women oppressive practices and thoughts while embracing the non-oppressive traditional culture of Somali people. On the other hand, female characters such as Valerie and Padmni are presented against African traditions so that they fail to portray attributes of African womanhood that African feminists postulate. Moreover, the novel brings male characters like Aar who support women's freedom and strive to transform women suppressive practices and ideologies in contrast with patriarchal minded male character, Digaaleh.

Chapter Five: African Feminism in West African Novels

This chapter deals with the analyses of novels selected from the West African region. The Western part of Africa is known for its prominence in Anglophone novels. In this region of the continent, countries such as Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria own many globally credited novelists and critics. In the history of modern African literature and criticism, those who pave ways such as Camera Laye, Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Ayi Kwei Armah and Eustace Palmer few from the many others are the contributions of West African region. In addition, the West African region is the home for worldwide well-known African feminist women writers and critics such as Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi, Molara Ogundipe-Leslie, Catherine Obianuju Acholonu, Obioma Nnaemeka, Mariama Bâ', Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, Aminatta Forna, Ata Aidoo and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie among others (Alkali et al, 2013; Melakneh, 2008; Sadia, 2016). In this research, Sierra Leonean novel, *Ancestor Stones* and the Nigerian novel, *Season of Crimson Blossoms* are considered as representative samples of contemporary West African novels in English. This chapter presents African feminist analyses of these selected novels in that order by providing synopsis of each novel.

5.1 Plot Summary of *Ancestor Stones* (2006)

Ancestor Stones is the story of a family of a polygamous wealthy man, Gibril Kholifa who owns eleven wives and three dozen children, and four women characters who are Gibril's daughters narrate it. The novel begins with the narration of a female character Abie who dwells in London and receives a letter written by her cousin Alpha informing that her four aunts: Asana, Hawa, Mariama and Serah give her their father's coffee plantation found in Rofathane, Africa. This letter reminds Abie how Europeans came to know Africa and "the women's garden" that she has been told since her childhood. The four aunts of Abie narrate the novel, and they tell Abie stories of their father and his many wives as well as their own life experiences.

Asana is the eldest aunt of Abie whose mother, Ya Namina is the head wife who has indisputable power over her other ten co-wives. Asana has a twin brother Alusani who has been more loved and favored by his mother Ya Namina than her but dies at the age of ten. Asana is married to Osman who already has two wives. However, Osman rejects her because she cannot cook delicious food. Although she re-marries a second husband, her married life cannot endure, but she

has two children: Kadie, a daughter and Alpha a son. Asana opens "Kholifa Turay Cloth Merchants" shop with Madam Turay that has changed her life.

Hawa works as a servant of a white man, Mr. Blue who leads mining works where Africans are laborers but later leaves the job because of the laborers' strike against him. Although Hawa prefers a polygamous husband like Asana, she marries a poor man who works at slaughterhouse and bears six children to him of which only three survived. After her first marriage is failed, Hawa again marries a second husband, Khalil, who wards her father's home, but she fails to give birth so that Khalil's parents begin to complain. In order to avoid the complaint, she finds another wife, Zainab for Khalal who has managed to bear children, but Zainab also wins Khalil's attention, and he abandons Hawa.

Unlike Asana and Hawa, Mariama is educated first in the European missionary school and then awarded a scholarship; thus, she goes to Britain where she suffers from nervous flop because of solitude and cultural estrangement. After her graduation, she comes back home and works as a teacher in the missionary school. Mariama has deep-rooted knowledge about her ancestors' mythical-cultural practices and thus she is disappointed by the contemporary Sierra Leone for the nation is abandoned by its old, great gods as a result of colonial/ neo-colonial destruction of the indigenous tradition. She has had strong intimacy with her mother who counts stones to determine her fortune. However, her mother is compelled to stop the traditional spiritual practice because her husband, Gibril accepts Islam and Haidera, who is the Islamic leader tells Gibril that the traditional spiritual practices are *haram* so that Gibril forces his wives to obey Islamic rules.

Serah, the youngest aunt of Abie, is educated in Britain. Serah also has strong connection with her mother Saffie, whom she considers her typical model. In England, Serah meets he country boy, Ambrose and marries him. As she gives birth to a child, she stops her study and begins to work as waitress in "Lyons Coffee Shop". Later, Serah and Ambrose come back to Sierra Leone and Ambrose gets a job at General Court, but Serah stays at home nursing children. Then Serah finds out that her husband has sexual affair with her close friend, Hannah. Although Serah wants to negotiate the matter with Ambrose, he proudly tells her that he commits adultery because he is in Africa, and hence she divorces him.

Finally, Abie visits Rofathane, where her grandfather's coffee plantation is situated, and Abie tells us about her bathing in a river in the morning where four of her aunts have joined. As they have finished bathing, Mariama gives Abie a black pebble that becomes favorite playing tool for Abie's daughter as her great grandmothers used to do.

5.1.1 Representation of Patriarchal Ideology

Patriarchal ideology is not only performed by men but also by women who internalize such thoughts and accept their inferior position without question (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994). *Ancestor Stones* depicts how women themselves have been cooperative in facilitating patriarchal ideology. The following narration from the novel maintains this point.

> My brother slid into this world: small, still and silent...My mother cradled him and called for him to come back. When she took my name away from me and gave it to him. If only he would come back, she promised, he would be the firstborn....The baby opened his eyes, black eyes....Because his first deed in this world was to take from me what was mine (Forna, 2006, p. 18).

Ya Namina, Asana's mother is a patriarchal woman. Asana deserves the title of firstborn as she comes out of her mother's womb first even though she is a twin. Nonetheless, her mother gives the title to her male twin since in patriarchal ideology male is more privileged than female. In this connection, Kambarami (2006) shows that in patriarchal ideology male rules female by right of birth and even if the male child is not the firstborn in a family. Even so, Asana says that "the women who had witnessed my birth called me Nurr too because I was the true firstborn..." (Forna, 2006, p. 19). This indicates that in the tradition of Sierra Leone, a girl can be entitled to firstborn because the surrounding women who call Asana firstborn clearly recognize the tradition that automatically allows girls to be firstborn; however, Ya Namina deconstructs such tradition and instead implements the patriarchal biasness towards the male child.

Above all, Ya Namina has been highly concerned with her son as the narration goes "our mother worried he was not strong enough to make the journey" (Forna, 2006, p. 20), but she refuses to give motherly care to Asana that she whines, "My mother never feared for me" (Forna, 2006, p. 18). In this excerpt, although there is room to argue that girls are stronger than boys are, and they can handle their matters independently, Ya Namina's apprehension for her male child neglecting

the female child does not confirm this argument since she has shown an obvious discrimination between her twin children. To the worst, even though Asana and Alusani are twins who are born at the same time, Ya Mamina forces Asana to carry her brother who is the same age. Asana scornfully expresses the burden as, "My brother barely bothered to learn to use his own legs; he knew I was there to bear his weight" (Forna, 2006, p. 19). This means that in a patriarchal culture, women are created just to serve men. Here, the novel stresses how patriarchal ideology compels women to carry every burden of men despite the real circumstances in which they live.

Ancestor Stones also lets slip the ways in which patriarchy maintains traditional gender roles. In the patriarchal gender role, there is a boundary between works done by men and women. As patriarchal ideology subjugates women, routine household works such as cooking, washing and related shores are undermined so that men refrain themselves from such activities (Ezeaku, 2014). This is the reason that the society teases "Pa Thaka, a fisherman who lived there alone without a woman of his own, cooked and washed for himself...Behind his back they called him a woman" (Forna, 2006, p. 21). Activities like cooking and washing have been feminized in patriarchal thinking, so even though a man wants to help his wife by doing such activities, he could not have moral and courage for he fears his society's negative reward.

Beyond marginalizing women's role, the people have underestimated women's personality since their identification of Pa Thaka as "woman" carried a negative connotation. Again, Serah confirms that in the tradition where she is brought up, women are exploited in many ways. "The way I was raised, only after all the men had eaten did the women sit down to share what was left. And it was the women who fetched the water and carried the heavy loads" (Forna, 2006, p. 174). In addition to degrading women's values, patriarchy expects any woman to be flawless in such chores in order to be a good wife. *Ancestor Stones* uncovers such patriarchal injustice towards women when Osman, Asana's husband demeans her:

> He shamed me in public…In front of his uncles he ordered me to remove a dish of ***fourah*** cakes I had prepared, insisting they were not fit to serve to guests....Osman's mother was quick to support her son. 'Useless girl. No good in the kitchen!'….Osman made people think I was a bad wife (Forna, 2006, p. 103).

This citation shows that women's role as cooks is an important criteria for a patriarchal wifehood. As a result, Osman embarrasses Asana in front of guests, and his mother degrades Asana's personality to "useless girl". To that effect, Osman has divorced her and she is forced to go back to her parents "like a no-good fish tossed back into the water" (Forna, 2006, p. 105). Osman's patriarchal thought has blinded him to see Asana's role beyond discharging household routines, and therefore he decides to send her off for she fails to meet the requirement of his society. Even though African feminism does not ponder wifehood as entirely oppressive, it does not acknowledge that the primary role of wifehood is discharging household activities. In African feminism, wifehood is accepted when it grants equal role and right to husband and wife (Phillips, 2006; Oyewumi, 2003).

Forna further exposes that even educated men consider women as just created for cooking and serving their husbands. Serah and her husband Ambrose have received modern education from Britain. When they come back to Sierra Leone, Ambrose gets a good job at the Attorney General in the country while Serah stays home nursing children. Although she frequently asks him to facilitate for her to get a job, he refuses by making different reasons. Desperately, Ambrose's friend whom he invites home pesters Serah for not cooking food as she describes, "His friend belched and laughed, a big laugh, fat with scorn. 'Let your woman cook some rice for us. What do you think a wife is for, my man?" (Forna, 2006, p. 183). Ambrose's friend underscores the patriarchal ideology that restricts women's role to the kitchen. He compels Ambrose to force Serah arguing that wife is just a subordinate being whose purpose is only cooking.

Although the education level of Ambrose's friend is not mentioned in the novel, he is a city dweller where people lead modern and better lives than rural inhabitants as well as he is the close friend of the well-educated Ambrose. However, he has internalized the patriarchal ideology so that he is not ready to update his mind in accordance with the dynamic contemporary world in which women's equality and freedom has been crucial agenda. What tempers Serah is that Ambrose's refusal to defend her as she says, "I would have felt better if he'd told his friend to watch how he spoke in front of me, but instead he tossed the man's jacket towards him" (Forna, 2006, p. 183). His silence implies that he agrees with his friend's idea. Even more, Ambrose thinks that African men have absolute right to cheat over their marriage. When Serah finds out that he has committed

adultery with her best friend, Hannah and asks him to confirm, he boasts on her rather than feeling guilty as he says:

> 'You are my wife and Hannah will never be a threat to you.' Those were his words... Then it dawned on me-Ambrose was confessing to an affair....'Now Serah,' he had said in his lawyer's tones. 'Now Serah. You must understand. This is Africa. We are in Africa now. And I am an African man. That's just the way it is.' No, Ambrose hadn't been confessing at all. He'd been boasting! (Forna, 2006, p p. 185-186).

Ambrose has had great exposure to see different experiences because of his education and his exposure to the Western world. Indeed, he has studied law and has enough knowledge about women's rights in general and committing adultery upon one's marriage is a crime. However, he does not regret about what he does. To the worst, he intends such a crime as his right because he is an African and lives in Africa where laws about women's rights are written on paper but not implemented. This underscores African feminists' claim that fully-fledged freedom of women could only be acquired when there is a possibility to create transformed society that understands women's burdens and believes in women's equality and freedom from oppression.

Even though African feminists believe in the role of education in facilitating women's freedom, it alone never helps because Western education system that maintains patriarchal ideology has been continued in post-colonial African education activities and curricula (Cherop, 2015; Kambarami, 2006). Thus, as the behavior of Ambrose shows, Western based philosophies and epistemologies could never solve problems of African women in particular and African people at large. Consequently, African feminism stresses building theories and methodologies, which are grounded in African traditional wisdom and philosophies to bring lasting liberation to African women and their respective society (Nnaemeka, 2003; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994; Ogunyemi, 1985).

5.1.2 Women and Post-independence Complications

Like many other post-colonial African countries, post-independence Sierra Leone is full of teething troubles that *Ancestor Stones* vividly portrays. The female character, Serah complains about how post-colonial civil war (between 1991 and 2002) and incessant military coups damage the life of ordinary people and women. "The Army handed over power with one hand, only to seize it with the other a year later. Old enemies created new factions and joined together against a

common foe, us: the women and the children and the ordinary people" (Forna, 2006, p. 223). In Serah's view, the most vulnerable and victims of post-colonial political problems are women and children including ordinary men.

For instance, a female character, Redempta who strives to facilitate the national election process with Serah has been killed along with her family members as Serah pronounces, "Of the many lives destroyed by its rage, one was Redempta. Murdered, alongside her husband, her children and countless others, the day the rebel army stormed the city" (Forna, 2006, p. 223). Redempta's assassination along with her husband and children for her engagement in politics symbolizes the difficulty of women's participation in post-colonial African politics. Particularly, Serah seems to be worried about the exertion of women's struggle for freedom in post-colonial Sierra Leone as she grumbles about every institution of the nation that has been suppressing women when they try to emancipate themselves from oppression. Indeed, Serah contemptuously comments on how the post-colonial people of her nation become tired of waiting for a bright future since dictators struggle to seize the political and economic power:

> People settled down to wait. And waited. And waited. And just as they were beginning to wonder how much longer we might have to wait, to fear our leader was just a pretty face with a silver tongue, he was toppled by another young man…he announced we were to have elections for the first time in many years few believed it, and many didn't hear at all because they had given up listening a long time ago (Forna, 2006, p. 213).

Serah reveals that there is no promising circumstance in post-independence Sierra Leone where individual dictators run for power by overthrowing one another through military coups. Even though the people have expected civil government that should come to power through democratic elections, those leaders who seize power by continuous takeovers never practically held election rather than giving unfulfilled promises. Thus, no post-independence Sierra Leone's leader was/ is practically able to make the people's dream real so that Serah scornfully expresses her people's guilt that "the rest of the world looked on, smiling fondly...We could not see they were really laughing at our foolishness" (Forna, 2006, p. 212). McFerson (2012) underscores Serah's concern by unveiling the existing reality of post-colonial Sierra Leone where the towns and villages have

inadequate infrastructures and public service institutions such as hospitals, clean water, road facilities and the like. To the contrary, those who grab power lead comfortable lives.

> Government ministers who built houses high on the hill. Houses with east and west wings, pillared porches and glass chandeliers....The wives of these big men drove around in shining Mercedes, frequently flew out of the country with their husbands on official business, shopped and slept between Egyptian cotton sheets in smart hotels. Meanwhile the price of rice climbed higher every day. People went to withdraw their savings from the bank and found they were refused their own money.... The poorest souls walked around with swollen stomachs and feverish eyes (Forna, 2006, p. 177).

The excerpt perceptibly exposes the great distinction between ordinary people and political leaders in the post-independence Sierra Leone. Those who acquire political power belong to higher class, whereas the powerless ordinary people go to the lower class and lead miserable lives. This is because post-independence African leaders have failed to satisfy the basic needs of their people rather than continuing legacies of colonialism (Abiye, 1998). In the process of decolonization, the native bourgeoisie and political elites do not truly aim to change the colonial political system and improve the situation of the majority colonized rather they strive to gain access to the wealth and social prestige that had formerly been seized by the colonists (Fanon, 1968).

Those black governors who come to power through the struggle of ordinary people against the colonial power lead luxurious lives while the lower class people suffer from poverty because the government has never endeavored to alter the miserable livelihood of the majority and therefore, women and the poor people in general live in agony. This shows that post-colonial Sierra Leone is "Hell" for both lower class men and women while it is "Heaven" for those upper class ones that Mariama appallingly states, "The animals grew fat while the humans starved…The abundance of food gave the dogs a new confidence, the only ones with the freedom of the city" (Forna, 2006, p. 245). This indicates that poverty is widespread throughout Sierra Leone where many dwellers cannot afford basic diet as they subsist below the poverty line. As poor as Sierra Leoneans are in general, women are poorer still (McFerson, 2012). Forna also reveals that the post-colonial leaders of Sierra Leone are dictators as Serah's witness below implies.

> I bought food for the table with the new money with the President's face on it, but did not notice the prices because Ambrose's salary was enough to cover our needs. At the post office I bought stamps with the same man's face on them. The world's first self-adhesive postage stamp was invented in this country (Forna, 2006, pp. 181).

Serah ironically states that the president of the country does not worry about the poor people he leads, rather he endeavors to glorify his personal image. The president is a dictator who controls everything in the country as his face is seen in all heritages of the country, and he works hard to establish his dictatorship legacy rather than working for the prosperity of the country and its people. Serah has never suffered from poverty as her husband belongs to the ruling class who earns much money, but she feels pity for those who struggle for survival. This confirms that African feminists struggle not only for women but also for children and lower class men in order to bring sustainable liberation to women and their societies.

5.1.3 Destabilizing Patriarchy

African feminist literary texts are expected to create characters that resist women's and their respective society's oppression (Kolawole, 2004; Ogunyemi, 1985). Many characters of *Ancestor Stones* meet this point as they challenge their oppressors. Asana's mother, Ya Namina internalizes patriarchal ideology and shows cooperation to suppress women. Hence, she projects her daughter in accordance with patriarchal socialization. Nonetheless, Asana resists her mother when she says, "My mother told me: 'Before you are married keep both eyes open and after you are married close one eye.' But when I was young I closed my ears instead. I refused to listen to my mother" (Forna, 2006, p. 89). Here, Asana does not want to continue the patriarchal tradition that has been governing the lives of her mothers and grandmothers; rather she seems to oppose it. Besides, Asana deconstructs the patriarchal differentiation of men and women's sexual interest:

> I had been brought up to believe men were always in a state of desire. Our mothers told us to cover ourselves when we came back from bathing…Cover yourself, there's a man coming. A woman's modesty and a man's desire were what made us different from each other. Yet I knew that I felt desire, even lying there next to the man I no longer loved (Forna, 2006, p. 104).

Asana disproves the patriarchal projection of men and women concerning their biological desire. Patriarchy compels women to hide their sexual desire as mothers advise their daughters not to expose their sexual yearnings to men because men may force women to have sex with them. Such projection of young women by patriarchal mothers gives room for men to abuse women; that means even if a man rapes a woman, there is a possibility to blame the victimized woman saying that she invites the man to rape her by showing her body. Moreover, men are not advised to cover their bodies not to arouse women's sexual desire, and they are indirectly allowed to satisfy their sexual thirst when they see uncovered body of women. Yet, Asana contends that there is no difference between male and female regarding sexual desire and by giving her own personal experience, she deconstructs the long believed patriarchal view of human sexual craving. Moreover, Asana refuses her aunts' advice to get married for the third time:

> My elders had turned out in force to urge me to take a husband. The store was a success, they were pleased at that, naturally. But now I would need a man to help me. I could not see why they should say this.... Besides, I was happy... My aunts thought that I was unnatural not to want a man in my life, but to me it seemed the most natural thing in the world (Forna, 2006, p. 199).

Asana first marries Osman being his third wife by her own choice, but Osman rejects her for failing to cook delicious food. Again, she has been engaged in the second marriage with Alpha's father, but this affair also has not succeeded. Hence, she decides to lead a single life being engaged in a collaborative trade with Madam Turay. However, her aunts compel her to have a man beside her. Yet, she argues that since she is successful without husband and happy in such state, her unmarried life is very natural so that she decides to be with her two children. Even though Asana's aunts seem to reflect African feminist notion of complementarity, Asana considers it as patriarchal obligation that demands every woman to get married in order to meet the rank of proper womanhood. Learning from her previous experiences of two marriages, Asana prefers to remain unmarried. As it has been indicated above, Asana's marriage had been patriarchal and oppressive so that she opts to free herself. Although African feminists do not reject wifehood, they differentiate patriarchal wifehood from mutually understandable marriage where both husband and wife enjoy equal freedom and respect to one another. Thus, Asana rejects the patriarchal notion of wifehood that ponders unmarried life as unnatural.

Additionally, Asana's involvement in trade travelling to many African countries connotes that she is liberated from indoor tasks as she is now performing outdoor activity. Especially, Asana is grown up in a rural area and she had no access to modern education as she says, "nobody ever bothered to teach me to write…I taught myself never to forget" (Forna, 2006, p. 24). Conversely, she has deep-rooted knowledge about patriarchal subjugation of women and believes in women's capacity to lead independent and successful life as she says, "I had made the life I dreamed of, and it suited me. I had taken my own path, neither right nor left" (Forna, 2006, p. 200). Here, Asana seeks to deconstruct what has been believed as right or wrong concerning women's action and thought from the perspective of her patriarchal society. Rejecting such belief, she goes by her own way and becomes successful. Thus, Asana is economically independent and confident enough in her ability to achieve her vision of life that meets African feminists', particularly womanists' vision of creating autonomous women.

Furthermore, another rural woman character, Saffie resists patriarchal suppression by refusing to oath when she is asked by elders to confirm that she does not commit adultery. Her husband, Gibril forcefully "demands a confession, there and then. And she, with her toes pointed down and her chin tilted up, grabbing breaths as fast as she can. She confesses" (Forna, 2006, p. 80). However, when she appears in front of elder juries, "she claims her confession was falsely given" (Forna, 2006, p. 79). When she knows that her husband cannot leave her unless she confesses, she obeys his demand in order to escape from his hand without being harmed. Hence, she systematically employs the tactic of negotiation as she strives to cope with the harsh situation; but when she gets an opportunity as she appears in front of elders, she challenges him that her confession is false. Unfortunately, the elder judges force Saffie to confess. Nevertheless, Saffie prefers to divorce Gibril instead of maintaining her marriage by submitting herself to him.

Because Saffie initiates the idea of divorce, she endeavors to get money to payback her bride price by facing challenges of "the travelling, the boarding, the buying and selling; all of this was so my mother could pay her bride price back. To free herself from our father" (Forna, 2006, p. 80). As she fails to payback her bride price to liberate herself from oppressive marriage, she chooses migration and "she headed to the South" (Forna, 2006, p. 86). Saffie's decision clearly indicates that in African traditional societies, there have been strong women who challenge patriarchal oppression and this supports African feminists' argument against Western feminists' stereotypical

generalization of African women as passive obedient to patriarchal suppression. *Ancestor Stones* maintains African feminists' claim that says feminist movement in Africa has been indigenous. Almost all African feminists agree that the thought and practice of feminism is not brought to African from the Western world because of colonial modernity and expansion of Western education, rather in traditional African societies, women have been practicing feminist activities.

5.1.4 Advantages and Disadvantages of Polygamy

Oyewumi (2003) states that Western feminists view polygamy as a barbaric evil that symbolizes the degradation of African women and hence the low state of Africans which is alien to the civilized Western societies while monogamy as the only normal, civilized and true form of marriage. Although there are negative sides to polygamy, it has been implemented by African women for long as the effective tool of negotiation. Through male polygamy, African women have been minimizing the burden of household chores that patriarchal gender roles loaded on them (Nnaemeka, 2005). In contrast to Western feminists' depiction of African polygamy as brutal tradition, African women define it by identifying its negative and positive aspects that one of the female characters, Hawa defines the term co-wife:

> Do you know the meaning of the word in our language ***ores? Ores***. It means co-wife. The women who share your husband with you. The women with whom you take turns to cook. The women you give whatever is leftover in your own pot. The women who are the other mothers of your children, who suckle your baby when your own milk has dried up or unexpectedly soured. But the word has another meaning, too. Do you know it? No? Then let me tell you. It means rival (Forna, 2006, p. 56).

This delineation of co-wife reflects that polygamy has been given an important place by African women. Although Hawa knows that co-wives can be rivals to each other as they share a single man, she recognizes multiple benefits that she gets from her co-wives. In other words, Hawa identifies the advantages and disadvantages of being a co-wife, and as the listed advantages weigh up, she wants to negotiate and compromise. Hence, Hawa regards being a single wife as being a servant. She complains, "This man was so poor I became his only wife. I started my married life working like a servant" (Forna, 2006, p. 145). Hawa wants a co-wife who could share her burden. She realizes this wish after she marries the second husband upon the failure of her first marriage.

When Hawa fails to bear a child to Khalil, she uses her co-wife, Zainab, to solve her problem of bearing children and to lessen the burdens household chores.

> Khalil told me his mother complained she had no grandchildren...he repeated her words to me: 'She says you're too old.' Something that told me he agreed with his mother. It was as though a snake had bitten my heart. Yet how could I possibly tell him the truth? I couldn't go back to the clinic to find the doctor… No children for Khalil…I loved him so much I sacrificed my own happiness for his sake. I found Khalil a wife. Zainab. I chose her myself. I even begged one of my brothers to give me the money for her bride price... The girl turned out to be as hard a worker as I had hoped…Khalil's mother was satisfied, at least she stopped sending her complaints to my house inside her son's mouth (Forna, 2006, pp. 154-155).

Hawa uses the co-wife as a negotiating tool with her husband and his mother who hates her for not bearing children. Because she loves Khalil, she does not want to lose him. Khalil is Hawa's second husband who is younger than she is. She marries him after her first marriage with slaughterhouse worker has been broken. She bears six children to the slaughterhouse worker and only three of them are alive. While giving birth to her sixth child she encounters health problem and the doctor who treated her has closed her womb without her knowledge. Thus, she convinces Khalil to bring the second wife who can fill the gap of childbearing and help her by doing household routines. Consequently, she decides to share the husband as a compromise since she dreads that her beloved husband may leave her for failing to meet the society's expectations.

Another female character, Asana, is married to Osman as the third wife because she thinks that her co-wives can teach and shape her in the struggle to win life. She opines that "I become some man's third wife…After I married I learned a lot….I learned about women how we shape each other (Forna, 2006, p. 89). In Asana's view, a co-wife is not a foe; rather she is a close and very important friend who fills her counterpart's gap. Asana practically witnesses the significance of a co-wife when she fails to cook delicious food and hence her husband offends her. To avoid such disgraceful circumstances, her co-wife, Ngadie supports Asana in a way that her husband re-honors her because "the dish she cooked was one of Osman's favorites…I claimed it as my own and watched as Osman ate two helpings, while I managed no more than a few mouthfuls" (Forna, 2006, p. 104). Hence, the co-wife has helped Asana in a way that corrects her bad image perceived

by her husband. This cooperation enables Asana "to be grateful to her and to love her" (Forna, 2006, p. 105) rather than considering Ngadie as her competitor who runs to win her husband's attention. This refutes the Western feminists' depiction of African women as backwards who blindly submit themselves to patriarchal oppression while reinforcing African feminists' argument that African women had/ have used polygamy as a systematic tool of negotiation and compromise in order to cope with the harsh patriarchal environment (Nnaemeka, 2005; Ogunyemi, 1985).

When we see the disadvantages of polygamy, while the head wife is given privilege, other co-wives are subject to husbands' discrimination and mal-treatment. Asana's description of her mother exemplifies this point.

> My mother was the senior wife. There was a time when I was so pleased with myself that I was the daughter of the most important of the wives…it was she who had the authority to decide which of the women should cook for my father, or travel with him when he went away on business…Even my father would not confront my mother, for she was older than him in years (Forna, 2006, p. 30).

The institution of polygamy has given special autonomy to the head wife, Ya Namina. Even though the institution gives mere servants position to other co-wives, Ya Namina possesses highest power than the husband. Gibril's fear and respect towards his senior wife Ya Namina, maintains Oyewumi's (2003) contention that in African tradition, gender does not determine one's social position rather what determines is age. Beyond that, Ya Namina owns unshakeable authority to choose co-wives for her husband in a way that she controls them:

> Finda the servant told me my mother was the only one of the wives my father had chosen for himself…All the rest of the wives were chosen by Ya Namina. After my father brought my mother into the house, Ya Namina went out and found more wives. She didn't like a wife she couldn't control. Always she and my mother were polite to each other (Forna, 2006, p. 56).

Forna's representation of Ya Namina maintains that in African tradition, polygamy is not oppressive to the extent that the Western feminists understand it. However, the co-wives have been silenced, and they are fully submissive to the patriarchal conditioning that honors the head wife. Gibril, the husband, does not care for his other wives who have been chosen by Ya Namina

because he does not love them. Hence, such women are treated as mere objects that are brought to serve the head wife and the husband being denied their personal will and right. Nevertheless, Ya Namina has been polite to Hawa's mother in spite of her hidden jealousy since she is the only co-wife who is chosen by Gibril himself so that she receives special care from the husband. "That day! The day every one of my father's wives wished she was my mother. And every one of his daughters wanted to be me" (Forna, 2006, p. 59). This brings one of the main problems of polygamy. In polygamous marriage, men do not treat their co-wives equally. As Gibril loves Hawa's mother more than others, his bias towards her has been obviously seen. Such partisanship leads the co-wives to hate each other so that many of Hawa's mother's co-wives show detest to her and even segregate her daughter.

Apart from the co-wives, their children also suffer from a psychological wound that is created due to their father's partiality towards the children of the beloved mother so that all half-siblings of Hawa wish to be loved and cared for by their father as he does to Hawa. On the other hand, Gibril's attention towards Hawa's mother has not been long lasting as Hawa says, "In those days she was my father's favorite wife" (Forna, 2006, p. 52). As Gibril's interest and love to her mother declines, he shows bias to Asana, the daughter of the head wife:

> When he had accepted my bride price my father knew he was marrying me to a man who was beneath me. The amount was so little. Like I was worthless…And yet all the time I was growing up I had listened to the stories of Asana's bride price, seen the listeners' eyes grow as big as coins as the figure rolled out (Forna, 2006, p. 153).

Gibril discriminates between his two daughters when he negotiates their respective bride prices. For Asana is the daughter of the most privileged head wife, he has enquired great amounts of money for her bride price while he demands small amounts for Hawa. Indeed, Gibril gives Hawa to her first husband as an object that she angrily says, "It was my own father who had exchanged me for free meat" (Forna, 2006, p. 153). What has to be clearly noted here is that, African feminists do not argue that African polygamy institution is free from problems; rather they contend that Western feminists blindly focus only on its negative aspects instead of analyzing both its advantages and disadvantages. In other words, Western feminists do not want to include various reasons that African women prefer polygamous men in their study so that they stereotypically portray African traditions of polygamy as backward practices and all African

women as submissive objects (Nnaemeka, 2005; Oyewumi, 2003). Forna's (2006) representation of polygamy in *Ancestor Stones* is not against African feminists' notion because unlike the Western feminists, she enables us to know both the strong and weak sides of polygamy as an African cultural practice.

5.1.5 Motherhood as Model of Resistance

According to Jacobs (2011), the lived experience of African mothers embodies feminist movements, and these mothers live beyond the confines of any conceptual frame and confront patriarchal structures through wisdoms and tactics that they have inherited from their mothers and grandmothers. *Ancestor Stones* reflects this view when Serah confidently acknowledges her uneducated mother, Saffie as her source of determination and self-pride:

> My mother taught me to cross that bridge and at the same time she also taught me how to master my own fear…Urged on by her gentle certainty I summoned my courage up from the inside. And as the years went by, in this simple way I learned to have power over my own fear" (Forna, 2006, pp. 214-215).

In contrast to patriarchal tradition where fathers are taken as models for their children, Serah's typical model is her mother. Serah gains confidence and power to struggle against her oppressors from her mother's practical and courageous lesson, but not from her modern and sophisticated education that she gets from England. Serah also applies her mother's resistance technique when she finds out that her husband Ambrose has established a sexual affair with her close friend, Hannah. First, Serah tries to negotiate with him the matter, but he argues that he has the right to do whatever he wants to do since he is an African man and lives in Africa.

As Serah has been well taught by her mother on how to be strong and fearless whenever she comes across with problems in life, Serah is never beaten psychologically when Abrose boastfully confirms that he has established an affair with Hannah. She confidently says, "There had been no tears" (Forna, 2006, p. 185). Thus, she decides to fight against him using her mother's tactic that she says, "He didn't know I was my mother's daughter" (Forna, 2006, p. 187) so that she has divorced him and leads an independent life and her mother still has a great role in her life:

> Ya Memso had held on to my mother's share of my bride price. Well, the marriage was over, so she gave it to me to rent a place until I found a job. My qualifications were good, it didn't take me long...in this way my poor mother, bound to my father by her own bride price, unexpectedly gave me the keys to my freedom...I think Ambrose was bluffing when he ordered me to leave our house, imagining I would soon beg him to take me back (Forna, 2006, pp. 187- 188).

Although Serah is a well-educated woman, she inherits the trend of resistance to patriarchal oppression from her uneducated rural mother. Besides, Saffie's share of bride price that her close co-wife Ya Memso has kept helps Serah until she finds a job. This strengthens African feminists' contention that African women in many traditional cultures do not speak of their feminist activities rather they show it in practice (Nnaemeka, 2003). Saffie has practically thought and given to Serah a systematic framework through which she fights against her oppressor. Mariama also proudly argues that her mothers and grandmothers have shaped her current personality:

> The name of my mother's mother. Of my grandmother. Of my great-grandmother and her mother. The women who went before. The women who made me. Each stone chosen and given in memory of a woman to her daughter. So that their spirits would be recalled each time the stone was held (Forna, 2006, p. 50).

Like Serah, Mariama is also educated in Britain, but she praises her ancestors' method of resistance to patriarchy rather than Western feminists' method. Mariama considers her mother, grandmother and great grandmother as one who shaped her identity. Her mother inherits such belief from her grandmothers, and transfers it to her daughter. This strongly underlines that African mothers have been transferring their wisdom and experiences to their daughters and granddaughters since the pre-colonial era to this contemporary period. Unlike the colonial and patriarchal consideration of African motherhood as passive subject created only to bear and nurture children, in *Ancestor Stones,* Forna takes the concept of motherhood beyond and portrays African mothers as strong, courageous, active and full of wisdom and transmitter of their ancestors' spirits to their children.

However, Mariama complains that such a tradition has been interrupted as her patriarchal father receives the imported religion and forces her mother to stop practicing traditional spirituality.

Forna's educated female characters, Searh and Mariama praise their mothers and foremothers for shaping their identity and struggle rather than the Western education they received. Motherhood is the true source from which a woman gets unyielding love and affection. In fact, in patriarchal culture, girls or women are given less love and attention by their parents and husbands, but they get unconditional love from their children that Asana's witness of her co-wife, Ngadie:

> Ngadie was already in the ground, fleetingly mourned a woman insufficiently loved as a daughter, unloved as a wife. But loved as a mother. And loved still. There were Ngadie's son and daughter. Ngadie in the male. Ngadie in the female. The him and the her, the he and the she of the woman I had known (Forna, 2006, p. 105).

The citation confirms that being a mother is being loved. Whether the child is male or female, he/she has true love for his/her mother. Thus, although Ngadie does not get affection from her parents and her husband, she is much loved by her son and daughter. Through Ngadie, Forna indirectly tells us that motherhood is also one of the ways in which African women resist patriarchal oppression. That means, the love that Ngadie gets from her children compensates what she lacks from her father and husband. Besides, the above extract implies that the African concept of motherhood passes the border of biological or gendered definition.

In African feminism, motherhood is not confined to biological role of a woman (childbearing) or to patriarchal notion (nurturing child and taking care of husband); rather it is omnipresent in the lives of both men and women. The African feminist notion of motherhood is further underpinned in the novel when Serah helps her husband to finish his education. "I had given up my postgraduate course once Junior was born. Now I went to work at the Lyons Coffee Shop, in order that Ambrose could finish his own studies. It was mindless work" (Forna, 2006, p. 176). Serah's mothering is not restricted to her child, but it is extended to her husband, as she is the main economic source of the house. She decides to nurture her child and to support her husband by giving up her college education in Britain. Thus, she gives more value to her child than her education that takes her to Britain. What is more, Hawa's wish and longing for the protection of her long dead mother maintains the important place of motherhood in Sierra Leonean culture:

> I stayed for I don't know how long, feeling the smooth bark against my cheek, wishing it was my mother's skin. I whispered her name. The wish turned into a dream...I was in her arms. Then just as quickly the dream lost its color, and turned back into a wish. Try as I might to hold on to the comforting feeling (Forna, 2006, p. 150).

This narration of Hawa portrays motherhood as an interminable comfort. Whatever ages a child has, he/she every time wishes to be under the protection of his/her mother. Hawa is a well-grown woman who already has children, but she consciously or unconsciously seeks her mother's fortification during her difficulty. She always needs her mother's comfortable guardians during her fearful moment. Not only children seek their mothers' protection and comfortable affection but also mothers unremittingly exhibit their longing and unconditional love to their children regardless of the children's age. This is also evident in the novel when Hawa shows her deep-rooted motherly affection to her son who comes to visit her after long service in army force. "There was my son standing.... I lifted him up and held him to my chest, pushed my nose into his hair and breathed his good smell" (Forna, 2006, pp. 160-161). Whether the child is big or small, his/her mother always considers him/her as an infant. This is why Hawa embraces her matured son as if he is a little child because children are the main sources of their mothers' happiness so that as soon as Hawa sees her son, she is not able to control her excitement.

Hawa's son is also her source of pride as she says, "My warrior he'd made me proud" (Forna, 2006, p. 205). Hawa has two other sons who have never visited her, yet she assures that her motherly responsibility to them will never be exchanged by timely benefit as she says; "Still, you can't throw away a bad child. They were my sons. I would always be their mother" (Forna, 2006, p. 205). In Hawa's view, being a mother is a natural responsibility that does not depend on the condition of the child's approach and commitment towards his/her mother.

5.1.6 Women's Subversion of Colonial Subjugation

Colonization, and its continuous form neo-colonization, have been affecting African people in general and women in particular. One of the causes of post-independence African hitches is the continuation of the colonial legacy through neo-colonization. The colonizers have left their colonies through front door, but they comeback through a backdoor for incompetent African leaders whom their former colonizers manipulate from a distance have sustained the colonial

political and cultural legacies. Palmer (2013) substantiates that the British treasured the Sierra Leone People's Party, which led the country to independence in 1961. Here it has been understood that the British offered independence to Sierra Leone since the colonial powers gave the political power to those whom they could manipulate from the distance.

Ancestor Stones maintains Palmer's claim when the female character Serah states, "We were allowed to choose our own Prime Minister and members of the cabinet, although the British would still tell them what to do" (Forna, 2006, p. 139). This underscores that even though post-independence African leaders have held the supreme political offices of their respective countries, they are not able to make decisions on the fates of their nation and people on their own. Consequently, Serah still blames the colonizers for indirectly ruling post-colonial African nations like Sierra Leone. Forna also writes back to the colonial subjugations of African women:

> Five hundred years ago, a caravel flying the colors of the King of Portugal rounded the curve of the continent…The sailors, stooped with hunger…And there they stood and gazed about themselves in disbelief…succulent mangoes, bursts of star fruit, avocados the size of a man's head. While from the ends of their elegant stalks pineapples nodded encouragingly, sweet potatoes and yams peeped from the earth, and great hands of bananas reached down to them. The sailors thought they had found no less a place than the Garden of Eden. And for a time that's what Europeans thought Africa was. Paradise…And I realized the story was really about something else. It was about different ways of seeing. The sailors were blind to the signs, incapable of seeing the pattern or logic, just because it was different to their own. And the African way of seeing: arcane, invisible yet visible, apparent to those who belong. The sailors saw what they took to be nature's abundance and stole from the women's gardens. They thought they had found Eden…But it was an Eden created not by the hand of God, but the hands of women (Forna, 2006, pp. 10-11).

In this extract, Abie, the youngest woman character who lives in Britain and is married to a white man, tells us that the European sailors' blindly distorted African women's effort and working culture. Before the arrival of European imperialists and colonizers, Africa had been like 'Eden Garden" because of African mothers' determination and hard work. Nonetheless, European invaders did not want to acknowledge how African women had been diligent and capable of

making the land resourceful to their people and to the world at large. Hence, they blindly seize the fruits of African women as the fruits are created naturally and do not have owners. Besides, the above extract maintains African feminists' particularly, motherists' consideration of African women as nurturers of their people and their land. In contrast with colonial projection and Western feminists' subjugation of African women as backward, savage and easily submissive to patriarchal gender roles, *Ancestor Stones* shows that African women are full of wisdom and hardworking whose agricultural works amuse even Europeans despite the fact that the Europeans fail to witness. This is the reason that enables motherists to call the continent as 'Mother Africa' (Jacobs, 2011). Mariama also undermines the way Europeans solve their problems:

> It was the first time I saw how Europeans often liked to do things the most difficult way. The nuns preferred to carry piles of books in their arms instead of on the top of their heads. And once in the town I saw a white woman pushing a baby along in a pram. She was sweating and puffing, the wheels kept getting caught in the ruts and the potholes. And the women with their children on their backs stopped to stare at her. Sister Eadie said that when babies are carried on their mothers' backs it makes them grow up with bow legs. But I did not think this could be true as my legs are straight (Forna, 2006, pp. 110-111).

This deconstructs the view that Europeans are full of wisdom and tactics in doing things simply. Mariama is one of the women characters with the experience of living with Europeans both in Sierra Leone and in Britain. Using her practical experience, she decomposes the long-held view of Europeans as sources of knowledge while the colonized Africans as orient naïve subjects who receive knowledge produced from the occident Western whites (Tyagi, 2014). Mariama comparatively presents that even uneducated African women do things in a simple way; whereas, those white women who are thought to be more systematic and wiser than Africans execute activities in a most difficult way. In addition, Mariama refutes the white woman, Sister Eadie's argument that disregards African women's wisdom of carrying children in a systematic way by providing practical examples in which she is brought up. In establishing the ontological and epistemological grounds of theorizing African feminism, African feminists are clearly conscious that gender construction is part of the processes of knowledge construction (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994). Hence, they agree that African mothers or women are sources of indigenous knowledge and

such knowledge has been transferring from generation to newer generations through storytelling (Nnaemeka, 2005). African mothers are typical medium through whose narration of stories that the wisdom and tradition transfer from generation to generation.

To this effect, *Ancestor Stones* is entirely storytelling in which four women characters (Asana, Hawa, Mariama and Serah) tell stories of their parents and grandparents to their niece, Abie. These stories reveal the pre-colonial history and cultural traditions of Sierra Leonean women and their society against Western discourses in a way that African cultures recognizes African women's wisdom and power. Asana tells us that in African traditional societies, "there were women who had already married and borne their children, women of age and wisdom, who had earned a certain kind of respect and whom the society honored with their title" (Forna, 2006, pp. 198-199). This refutes the colonial/ neo-colonial blind representation of African cultures as backward that totally suppresses women. Unlike Western feminist discourses that consider motherhood and wifehood as hindrance to women empowerment, *Ancestor Stones* enables us to see the room for honoring African women in African culture. The novel supports the view of African feminist, Oyewumi (2003) who argues that in African traditional culture, age and experience are given a higher position than sex. In other words, a person's social status is determined by his/her age, which enables him/her to get rich experiences and wisdom, rather than sexual difference.

Moreover, Forna depicts the pre-colonial African women as political leaders. Asana says, "We were the descendants of swordsmen who came from the North. Holy men and warriors led by a queen who blew in with the harmattan on horseback from Futa Djallon, dreaming of an empire that stretched from the desert to the sea" (Forna, 2006, p. 21). This quotation, besides sanctioning African feminists' argument of pre-colonial African women's engagement in politics, repudiates Western feminists' subjugation of pre-colonial African women as passive obedient of patriarchy. As well, Asana's mother had freedom to choose a husband of her interest after her first husband dies. "She stayed and chose a new husband from the younger brothers. She chose my father" (Forna, 2006, p. 17). This again falsifies the Western feminists' degradation of pre-colonial African culture as unrestrained in which women were seen as objects whose marriage proposals and fates had been decided by their fathers.

Concomitantly, Mariama's mother has been economically active and has her own means of income that Mariama states, "All the money she had of her own came from the sale of our snuff" (Forna, 2006, p. 37). This money is free from the influence of her husband. Forna's way of storytelling agrees with the way African women writers such as Flora Nwapa, Grace Ogot, Mariama Bâ and Buchi Emecheta tell stories that they have learnt from their mothers and grandmothers (Nnaemeka, 2005).

What is more, Forna blames some contemporary African women who deny their original identities while embracing an alien one. "We took our husbands' names to show how sophisticated, how Westernized we were. And most of all how different from our own mothers who kept the names they were born with all their lives" (Forna, 2006, p. 175). This implies that the colonial legacy is still dominant in post-colonial Africa, and thus some post-colonial African women are ignorant of the dignity and glory of their ancestors so that they incline to follow the style of white women. Equally, Mariama condemns both Islam and Christianity, which are imported to Africa from abroad for dismantling the indigenous spirits of African women.

> Because I remembered my mother and how she was forced to deny her own faith. In those days they were always coming to convert us. The Muslims from the North, the Christians from the South. We deserted our gods. But nobody wrote stories about that. Instead they congratulated themselves on how many souls they had saved. My own soul was saved twice. But my mother. My mother would not yield. And to this day nobody has ever come to me and said she was noble and righteous to do so (Forna, 2006, p. 33).

This extract reveals that African women have been cautious about the foreign imported religions but have been forced by their husbands to accept these religions while plummeting their own beliefs. Mariama's mother resists not dropping her indigenous faith of counting stones guided by her mother's spirit, but her husband forces her to stop it. This is for the reason that "any activity Haidera said was ***haram***, our father forbade" and "the Shekunas forced people to forsake the old gods, learn Arabic and pray in the new way" (Forna, 2006, p. 48). In addition to degrading the indigenous belief system, Islamic religion supports the patriarchal subjugation of women for

husbands force their wives to accept such imported religions. Likewise, Mariama criticizes Christianity for its systematic devaluation of African identity.

> They chose my new name and sent it in a letter to the bishop, who came up to the school and baptized all those girls who had new names. Mary Pagan babies. That's what we were. We knew our baptisms were paid for through something called the Pagan-Baby Project, only somehow we never realized we were those babies…I would go to sleep and dream strange dreams. After it I felt weakened, and that made me know it must have been the work of some kind of devil... In morning Mass I prayed to God and to the Virgin Mary, in the hope that the dreams were messages from Heaven. The answer never came" (Forna, 2006, pp. 109-110).

Mariama primarily accepts Christianity and gets access to education in the nuns' school that is brought to Sierra Leone by European missionaries, but she complains that Christianity also dismissed the indigenous beliefs and traditions of African people by giving derogatory name *Pagan*. Abiye (1998) argues that the colonial discourses had and have been undermining indigenous African traditions as paganism so that African novels strive to correct such misrepresentations. As well, Mariama in the above text argues that Christianity cunningly drive African people to change their identity. Forna through the female character, Mariama disproves the correctness of the religion because she does not get heavenly response for her prayers. In fact, missionaries teach the converts that an African spirit Kassila, "the sea god was nothing more than a story told by superstitious folk" (Forna, 2006, p. 110); however, Mariama witnesses that she meets the spirit when she suddenly falls in the sea. Mariama's practical witness reveals that unlike the ideal spirit in Christianity, the indigenous spirits really meet their worshippers. This witness indicates that Christian discourses are colonial projections that have been aimed at obliterating the true indigenous belief systems of Africa. As Ngugi (1993) argues, this emanates from the fact that the colonial or neo-colonial imperial system believes that the economic exploitation and the political control of African people could never be complete without depriving their cultural, social, mental and spiritual subjugation and extinction.

In general, Forna's *Ancestor Stones* along with exploring patriarchal subjugation of women, divulges the hostile reality of post-colonial Sierra Leone for women and majority of the dwellers

who fall under multiple problems and demands people to endeavor to correct such impediments. While deconstructing patriarchy and challenging post-colonial inability of the nation, Forna identifies the positive and negative sides of polygamy in a way that refutes Western feminists' stereotypical relegation of traditional African cultures and women. The novel represents motherhood as the multidimensional personality of African woman that demands all-rounded responsibility and at a time reflects its centrality to psychological, moral, spiritual, and didactic facets of African life. Forna also discloses the ways in which European colonizers and Islam devalued indigenous cultural traditions and spirits through Mariama and Serah who have received modern education going to Britain. These female characters strive to bring the lost traditions and spiritual practices unlike many post-colonial African elites who prefer the Western culture and life style by rejecting their African indigenous cultural traditions.

5.2 Synopsis of *Season of Crimson Blossoms* (2016)

Season of Crimson Blossoms was first published in 2015, but in this research, I have used the second edition, which was published in 2016. The novel is narrated in the third person point of view. A fifty- five years old widow, Hajiya Binta moves from Jose where she has been a primary school teacher for about twenty years to Abuja after her husband, Zubairu has been murdered because of conflagrations of faith and ethnicity. Binta has three surviving children: Hureira who often quarrels with her husband, Hadiza who leads a confortable married life, and Munkaila, the only son who is wealthy and supports Binta. As all her children are married and live away from her, Binta lives with Hureira's little daughter Ummi and her niece, Fa'iza who lives with her since her father and brother have died and her mother, Binta's sister has left for a second marriage.

Hassan Reza, who looks like Binta's deceased son, Yaro, hid himself inside Binta's house and unexpectedly hung her by threatening with a knife to give him money and gold. Then, Reza robs some materials and escapes. Latter, Fa'iza has seen some of the stolen properties of Binta back, but no one knows who brings them back until the assailant Reza comes when Binta is alone at home and tells her that he brings back the things he robbed. Since that day, Binta and Reza begin a secret love affair. Because Binta counts her relation with Reza as a sin, she has been disturbed since the commencement of the relationship.

While Binta and Reza are in a hotel, Mallam Haruna who proposes to marry Binta as a third wife sees them and spreads the story to the community, and thus even her closer friends start nagging Binta for they consider the act as a bad sin. To the worst, Mallam Haruna tells the story to Binta's son, Munkaila and Reza suddenly meets Munkaila at Binta's home. As soon as Munkaila sees Reza, he annoyingly attacks him, but Reza kills Munkaila and leaves, but finally police kill Reza while he has been attempting to escape.

5.2.1 Patriarchy and Muslim Women

Patriarchal tradition is one of the obstacles that hinder African women's freedom, and exposition of such obstacle can be considered as the first step to struggle against women's oppression. Although there have been indigenous patriarchal structures in Africa, their burden on African women has been intensified by colonialism and un-African religions such as Christianity and Islam (Arndt, 2002; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994; Stratton, 1994). In line with this, Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms* exposes how patriarchal ideology has been maintaining subordination of women in Nigerian Muslim Hausa society. People who accept the patriarchal ideology limit their daughters' destiny to wifehood so that the female protagonist, Binta has been compelled by her father and mother to get married when she is sixteen years old.

> Mallam Dauda went on to have a talk with Binta's father....Binta heard him thundering about how big his daughter had grown under his roof and how men now watched her jiggling her melons in public places, and how it was time for her to start a family of her own…Binta ran into the hut to weep at her mother's feet. The woman turned her face away to the wall, her hand poised uncertainly over her abdomen. Two days later, Binta was married to Zubairu, Mallam Dauda's son (Ibrahim, 2016, pp. 25- 26).

Binta's father is forced by the patriarchal ideology that demands girls to get married at their teenage. Therefore, he and his friend Mallam Dauda think that as every girl is created just for marriage, it lessens her parent's honor when she stays home beyond the time that the patriarchy expects her to join her husband. Thus, Binta's father decides that she must get married ceasing school as soon as he sees her in school with other girls wiggling her melons where he considers a public place. Thus, the role of African women in the patriarchal tradition is solely cramped around the family that encompasses their responsibilities as patriarchal mother, wife and housekeepers.

Binta's mother also internalizes the patriarchal ideology and thus accepts her inferior position so that she does not attempt to rescue her daughter. This is because in patriarchal socialization, as Ohaeto (2015) observes, girls are advised by their mothers to get married early and please their husbands being obedient wives while boys are socialized to view themselves as breadwinners and heads of households.

Moreover, in patriarchal ideology, man is considered as protector so that every woman should seek man's protection because she is physically and emotionally weak so as to defend herself from any kind of harm. Kambarami (2006) argues that patriarchal ideology fosters dependence, and hence most African women depend heavily on their husbands for support and protection. Once a husband dies, the woman quickly remarries to find another pillar of assistance and guardian to lean on. Ibrahim also reveals how women internalize such ideology when the young woman character, Hadiza argues, "a house without a man would look like easy pickings for fence-jumping miscreants of the sort that had broken in" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 21). Hadiza thinks that Binta's house is attacked in a day light by the robber just for she is a widow who has no man in her house. Thus, Hadiza's argument does not seem to maintain African feminists' assertion of cooperative relationship between men and women; rather it strengthens the patriarchal ideology that considers women as weak subjects who always seek the protection of strong and self-reliant men in their lives. Ibrahim again portrays how gender role limits women's activities to housekeeping even in the post-colonial Nigerian urban situations:

> At twenty-seven, Hadiza, Binta's youngest child, was already taking care of a husband and three children...Often, her husband, Salisu, who wore spectacles and spoke with effeminate gestures, would return home to discover that the settee or table had been moved (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 16).

The young urban woman, Hadiza is also victim of patriarchal ideology as she is restricted to the gender roles that her grandmothers had been playing in their patriarchal society. Hadiza is mainly occupied by household routines which are patriarchally considered as womanly tasks while her husband goes to outdoor activities. As a result, she is economically dependent on her husband. Hence, she wants to be assisted by her brother, Mankaila when she says, "You need to sponsor me to hajj" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 31). Hadiza's husband is wealthy who affords to make comfortable life

to his family, but as she is dependent on him and does not have power to use the money without his consent, she begs her brother to fulfill her needs. Many African feminists acknowledge wifehood as one of African woman's traditions, but they strive to transform the patriarchal wifehood that requires wives to submit themselves fully to their husbands. That is, the wife should not be considered as mere possession of her husband, but she has to be granted equal right with her husband so that she respects him and gets the same respect from him.

Another representation of patriarchal ideology in the novel is seen when Zubairu supports his son Yaro's engagement in Ganja trade because as he has no job, "it was Binta's paltry salary as a schoolteacher that kept them afloat in those days until Zubairu started another suya spot" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 146). Zubairu has been humiliated for his dependency on his wife, and instead he prefers to depend on his son where "Zubairu's shame no longer loomed as large because this time, it wasn't from his wife's purse they fed. It was from his son's, his *first* son" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 147) although Yaro's way of earning money is dangerous. Patriarchal ideology compels Zubairu not to prohibit his son from the crime of drug dealing. He prefers his son's illegal money than Binta's legal salary in fear of patriarchal criticism that results indignity as one of the ways in which patriarchal ideology functions is through giving different roles to men and women, where men occupy privileged roles like being the sole source of income for the family.

Besides, in the patriarchal tradition of Muslim Hausa, older men are allowed to have sexual relation and marriage with young girls while women are prohibited to sleep with boys younger than them. Thus, the fifty- five year old Binta feels abashed for she considers her sexual relation with a twenty-six years old man Hassan Reza as immoral and sinful. In fact, Binta seems to be deconstructing patriarchal ideology by passing the border that limits women's sexual engagement with younger men, but still she tries to obey such rule as she constantly blames herself:

> I am a decent, respectable woman. I have never been with any man other than my husband...Since the last time you came and …I have been thinking people could look at me and see fornication written across my forehead. Or perceive its smell on me (Ibrahim, 2016, pp. 56-57).

Binta's regret and embarrassment result from her society's worldview which honors women who refrain themselves from sexual relation with men other than their husbands. In other words, in the

patriarchal tradition, wives who commit adultery with men other than their husband are segregated and disgraced by the society. Conversely, this tradition allows men to marry more than one woman, and even men do not feel ashamed when they date women other than their wives. For instance, Mallam Haruna "an old man who already had two wives" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 140) requests Binta to have sex with him saying, "Why shouldn't we go out for a proper date someday… Binta, why not give me a chance? I am a match for any young man, wallahi, more than a match even. I am virile and I have experience" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 236). In Mallam Haruna's request, we do not observe guilt because in patriarchal culture, it is common and normal for men to have mistresses. In this relation, Kambarami (2006) states that in patriarchal culture any man can have many wives as he wants and can have extra-marital affairs as a bonus. Nonetheless, Binta has been disturbed for her engagement in the socially and culturally forbidden sexual affair.

Furthermore, Binta has been frequently nagged and segregated by her women friends who internalize the patriarchal ideology. For example, Murja, Ustaz Nura's wife ironically disgraces Binta during a gathering in Laraba's house as, "Murja sighed as she considered Binta...'The sin of some people is enough to provoke Allah's wrath and He will smite the earth overnight. Imagine all these shameless sugar mommies running after young boys, taking them to hotels" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 232). In the view of Murja, Binta has committed the worst crime and sin that even provokes God to punish other people. Murja ponders Binta's action as socially disgraceful and spiritually sinful for just she is a woman. Binta even does not attempt to defend her rather than feeling more disgraced and she "bowed her head" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 232). This implies how the societal criticism suspends women from practicing their rights and interests.

Sadly, Binta's unacknowledged relation leads her son, Munkaila to an unfortunate death while he is "trying to save his mother's honor" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 276). What makes Munkaila nervous is that he would not handle the scandal that his mother obtains from the society, and it makes him unable to control his anger as the narrator describes that "how he had growled, 'Mother' with such contempt that she still felt the sting. How his last conscious movement had been to push her hands away from him. She had never seen anyone die with so much anger" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 277). Munkaila expects his mother to obey the patriarchal rule that forbids middle aged or older women to have sexual relations with young boys. Thus, Ibrahim objectively portrays how women are oppressed in the post-colonial Nigerian Hausa Muslim culture.

In addition to Islam, Christianity also strengthens women's oppression as Binta says, "My husband was killed by some Christian boys...My sister's husband and her son were hacked to death by their Christian neighbors because…a Christian woman whose husband had been killed by some Muslim youths" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 229). As a consequence, Binta always suffers as "she still thought about it, about how they said Zubairu's corpse was butchered and burnt in the street…to the conflagrations of faith and ethnicity, to Jos" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 77). Besides, Binta has taken the responsibility of bringing up her niece Fa'iza because Asab, Fa'iza's mother "had returned to the village, having lost her husband and only son in the incessant turbulence in Jos" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 18). Moreover, Fa'iza, the young girl has been attacked by mental illness from this crisis for she loses her beloved father and brother so that Sadiya, Fa'iza's sister in-law says, "I am thinking you might want to go into therapy" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 196). The health problem of Fa'iza is resulted due to the incidents triggered by the conflict between Islam and Christianity, which are non-African religions.

What is more, *Season of Crimson Blossoms* portrays that patriarchal ideology operates through male polygamy. Having many wives gives men popularity in their society and is considered as a means of making friendship with respected men. Because he seeks to marry a third wife, Mallam Haruna gets the opportunity to be friends with a rich and respected man, Mallam Balarabe."Third wife! *Masha Allah*! And that had marked the beginning of their friendship, forged on the plurality of wives" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 158). Polygamy grants men a prospect through which they maximize their privilege and honor in their patriarchal society. In contrast, polygamy victimizes women since co-wives see each other as rivals when they compete to win their husbands' interest in them. Alhaji Babangida's wives contest each other to win his love through childbearing:

> Kareema and Abida born of the same father to different mothers…Alhaji Babangida, their father, had married Zainab first. After a year without being blessed with a child, he married Aisha. The co-wives took the competition to heart and were soon racing each other to see who would first have a baby.…After Kareema was born a girl, Zainab desperately willed the child in her womb to magically transform into a boy. After the birth of Abida, there was a race to see who would deliver the first son...That race was succeeded by the competition to deliver the most children (Ibrahim, 2016, pp. 66-67).

In addition to sharing a single man, these women's rivalry remains throughout their lives. They never lead stable and secured life out of worry in their entire life. In other words, the battle between Zainab and Aisha is endless; hence, they will remain in such a miserable life until their death. Nevertheless, their husband leads a comfortable life as they carefully treat him. In reality, it is not the co-wife who creates such a disturbed life to her counterpart rather it is the patriarchal system that allows the man to marry them just to privilege him. In sum, *Season of Crimson Blossoms* depicts various ways in which religious motivated patriarchal ideology privileges men by devaluing women and compelling them not to fight against their subjugation.

5.2.2 Women and Post-colonial Education

Even though many African feminists believe that educating women is a key for women's freedom as well for community development, they strongly argue that African education systems should be liberated from Western colonial approaches and should develop its curriculum based on African indigenous knowledge and tradition (Mikell, 1997; Nnaemeka, 2005). *Season of Crimson Blossoms* concurs with the above idea when one of the women characters, Mallama Umma, disappointedly says, "All these educated children have been saying we are old-fashioned and eat useless leaves. Now they are the ones researching and discovering that our parents who raised us on these things weren't entirely clueless" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 230). Here, it should be noticed that Umma's contention does not seem to reject education totally rather it suggests that African education and research systems should respect and reflect indigenous wisdoms instead of sustaining the colonial prejudiced view of African people and their cultures.

Umma confirms the point when she advises Laraba to think of her newborn baby's health condition saying, "Take him to the hospital, but herbs will cure him better. Umma tugged at his skin...'It's definitely jaundice" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 231). This suggests that Umma does not discard the service of modern hospital, but she argues that the child's disease would be more curable by traditional medicine than modern treatment using her practical experiences of such disease that her parents and grandparents used to cure it before the introduction of European hospitals.

Post-colonial African education system is not friendly to African women because its approach and curriculum rely on the colonial Victorian principle of education that creates great boundary between men and women, and thus it maintains patriarchal subjugation of women. Like the

colonial/ neo-colonial ideology, which is characterized by male dominance, patriarchal tradition considers girls as less intellectual than boys (Cherop, 2015; Steady, 2006). However, Ibrahim in *Season of Crimson Blossoms* portrays the female protagonist, Binta as a clever student as:

> Mallam Na'abba, the schoolteacher, had often told Binta that she was smart. That she could, if her father consented, continue schooling and perhaps someday become a health inspector...It was a far-off dream. She knew that much then. But Mallam Na'abba was passionate about its possibility. It was he who convinced her reluctant father to let her pursue her education for a while longer. That she could benefit the whole of Kibiya with her knowledge. Her father, skeptical as always, had agreed, but carried ridges on his forehead (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 24).

Binta's teacher witnesses that she is able to achieve her dream and her intellectual capacity would further benefit her society, but he predicts that her father may abort this goal of her. Binta also knows that her patriarchal father never recognizes her potential. She is certain that she would stop education and would be forced to marry a man whom she does not know, and she is forced to stop school at primary level and gets married as she recounts:

> I was taken out of school to marry a man I barely knew….After I'd had my first two sons, I told him there was an adult education class in the neighborhood and I wanted to join. He was reluctant at first, but I persuaded him. I studied while raising my children... All whilst studying for my teacher's certificate. I was a primary school teacher for about twenty years in Jos (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 59).

The fact behind the above excerpt is that in many African cultures in general and in Nigerian sub-cultures in particular, educating girls had/ has been regarded as wastage of time and money so that instead girls were/ are fated to get married early (Ohaeto, 2015). This patriarchal view stereotypically judges girls as incapable of obtaining the fruits of education that require intellectual capacity. As in most African patriarchal traditions, the North Nigerian patriarchal father restricts Binta's destiny to wifehood rather than encouraging her to succeed in education. Even though Binta obeys her father's decision and marries the man proposed by him, her interest and commitment towards education has never ceased. She has continued her education by negotiating with her husband, and becomes a teacher while raising children and taking care of her

husband. Here, it is prudent to notice that despite the challenges that destruct women's good hopes and dreams, women should be strong enough to achieve their dreams systematically. This systematic approach to win over patriarchal oppression is negotiation and compromise, which African feminists consider as one of the important weapons to fight against women suppressive thoughts and practices in post-colonial Africa contexts.

Binta's strong curiosity towards education is also proved when she persistently agitates Reza to carry on his education. She shows commitment to help Reza's education by providing him the registration fee. "She reached for her bag, fished in it, brought out a receipt and handed it to him....'Now all you need to do is fill the forms, attend some classes and write the exams" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 145). Therefore, Binta has unshakable attitude and commitment towards educating young generations to bring all-rounded social transformation. In addition to Binta, another woman character, Sani's mother has a good attitude towards education when she wants to educate her son as the narrator says, "But he had been trapped by the death of his young father years before, and a mother determined to live for her son. She wanted him to become a doctor or an engineer someday" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 42). Even though Sani's mother is a poor single parent who lives hand to mouth life, she is committed to educate her son with the hope that he would become a doctor or engineer.

On the other hand, a contemporary politician, Buba Maikudi who is a senator uses young boys to facilitate his corruption and crime and advises the poor young, Reza not to get education saying, "You are doing better than he who spent all those years in school, all that money gone, all that time wasted, for what?" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 154). Buba Maikudi wants Reza to serve him throughout his life for Reza does not have a fixed means of income. If Reza gets education, he will get knowledge and his own means of income, and thus he may not benefit the senator as he wishes. The senator advises Reza not to go to school.

Through Buba Maikudi, Ibrahim shows us how the post-colonial African leaders are selfish and dedicated to serve their own interest rather than developing their nations. By this means, the senator, Buba Maikudi, is the accurate representative of many post-independence African politicians and leaders who fail to meet their peoples' dream and expectations that motivated them to fight against colonial power. Instead of endeavoring to bring their citizens out of poverty and backwardness, the contemporary African politicians like Maikudi prohibit young generations from

education so that non-educated people cannot have awareness to demand their rights, and hence they remain being loyal slaves of the so-called politicians throughout their lives.

5.2.3 Women and Cultural Transformation

African feminism calls for socio-cultural transformation where women-oppressive practices and viewpoints must be avoided while maintaining non-oppressive ones (Nnaemeka, 2003; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994). This is because African feminism believes that African woman's necessities are entrenched in her culture, and therefore, particularly stiwanism focuses on active participation of women in Africa's transformation. To this end, African feminism emphasizes the structures that oppress women and the way women react to these established structures. The struggles of African women focus on the way that they have internalized the patriarchy and have come to endorse the system themselves (Ogundile-Leslie, 1994).

Season of Crimson Blossoms also states that the Islamic religious motivated patriarchal ideology has been gradually transforming because the young generation women begin to challenge the oppressive cultural traditions. Young women characters are portrayed as different from their mothers in various aspects. For instance, the way the 55 years old Hajiya Binta's attitude towards women's dressing style is different from the 15 years old Fa'iza. What Binta considers deviant way of dressing has been seen as a fashion by Fa'iza. As a result, Fa'iza does not seem to be governed by the old traditions that guided the lives of her mother and grandmother.

> Binta looked at the girl's face and her eyes widened. 'What kind of school allows girls to wear make-up as if they are going to a disco?'...'Come, wipe off that silly lipstick. It makes you look ill. And your uniform is too tight around the hips. You should be ashamed wearing it so tight...You better put on the bigger hijab to cover yourself up or else you aren't leaving this house'. 'Ashamed? But Hajiya, this is the fashion now. You are so old school, wallahi, you don't know anything about fashion anymore.' Fa'iza pouted (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 10).

Binta is an educated woman, but she wants to keep the tradition of Muslim women's dressing style, so she forces Fa'iza to avoid lipsticks and to wear bigger hijab. This is because Binta's life experience has been shaped by the doctrines of Shariah. Hence, she wishes to socialize Fa'iza in accordance with Islamic doctrine. However, Fa'iza wants to follow the day's fashion, and this

implies that no more younger generation women like Fa'iza prefer to implement such Islamic tradition in their lives. As well, the way Binta understands love is different from Fa'iza's understanding of love and sexual partnership:

> Fa'iza patted the book under her. 'You must have loved him a lot.' 'Love?' The word felt strangely heavy on Binta's tongue. 'I don't know, really. But when you have lived with someone all your life it doesn't matter whether you love him or not.' 'How can you live with someone you don't love?' 'In my day, we lived by what our parents taught us. We obeyed what they said. Now, things are different. Little girls like you are talking about love (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 77).

In Binta's age, it is her father who decides to whom she must get married, and thus whether she loves the man or not, she is obliged to marry him just to please her father. As a result, love is not considered as criteria for women of Binta's age. Nevertheless, the young generation girl, Fa'iza gives priority to love, and hence she will never voluntarily marry a man chosen by her father. In addition, Fa'iza deconstructs the deep-rooted patriarchal tradition that grants men (fathers) to use their daughters as any property that they can offer them to other men without question. Unlike their grandmothers and mothers, the new generation girls like Fa'iza freely express their view of love. They cannot submit themselves to patriarchally arranged marriage; rather they themselves choose whom they should marry. Moreover, Binta's daughter, Hureira has practically chosen her husband as Binta reveals when she advises her dauhgter to maintain her marriage:

> You chose him from among your suitors, this husband of yours, as you chose the one before him…I did not choose your father. We didn't even have a courtship. Yes, we had our differences but we still lived together until he died. We raised four children, your father and I, and we never talked about love (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 119).

The patriarchal marriage tradition in which Binta went through has been transformed as the new generation women like Hureira have got the right to choose their husbands out of their parents' influence. The above extract also reinforces that marriage should display tolerance and mutual respect between husband and wife which Binta and her husband properly exhibit. Binta's narration of her lived experience to her daughter shows that even though her husband is chosen by her father, she has maintained her marriage through tolerance and negotiation as both recognize and

respect each other's differences. However, Binta does not oppose Hureira's right of choosing whom she loves, but she reinforces the importance of tolerance and negotiation in order to run married life properly even if Hureira has chosen her husband. Binta supports the transformation of the oppressive marriage tradition, but she argues that such transformation should not totally destruct overall tradition. The above citation also enables us to learn that in Nigerian (African) traditions, nurturing children is the duty of both mother and father that Binta indirectly acknowledges her husband's equitable partcipation in raising their children. This underscores African feminists' claim that the task of mothering and nurturing children relies on both men and women in African tradition so that such trend has to be continuously transfered from generation to newer generations.

In addition, in Muslim Hausa culture of North Nigeria, it is not allowed for women to call their first son in his given name. We learn this from the novel when Binta narrates, "In my time, such things as a woman calling her first child by its name were frowned at. Some women didn't even acknowledge their second or third child" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 55). Binta has never called her late first son, Yaro in his name. In contrast, Binta's daughter, Hadiza calls her first son, Kabir by his name so that "Binta envied her this liberty she enjoyed, this luxury of calling her first child by its name and holding it and treating it like one's beloved. Such affection she, Binta, had never experienced from her mother, nor dispensed to her late son Yaro" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 54). Binta and her age mate women are badly enslaved by both religion and patriarchy since such women are denied their right to express their affection to their children.

Nevertheless, Binta has never criticized Hadiza for passing the boundary of patriarchy, rather she regrets about her past in which she had been denied the right to express her love to her children that her daughter Hadiza now enjoys. Indeed, Binta is surprised and enquires Hadiza: "Don't you ever feel strange calling him like that? By his name? Your first son?" (Ibrahim, 2015, p. 54). However, Hadiza does not feel shame for calling and showing love to her son as she argues "this is not your time as such, Hajiya…this is the twenty-first century. I shall not subject myself and my children to the shackles of the old ways like you did" (Ibrahim, 2016, pp. 54-55). Hence, Hadiza and like-minded women will never submit themselves to the patriarchal ideology that restricts them to have intimate relationships with their beloved children, and thereby these women are practically engaged in the task of socio-cultural transformation. Hadiza agrees with African

feminist notion of social transformation to emancipate women and their societies from despotic ideologies and practices unlike the above-mentioned older women who strive to preserve such like male-controlled systems.

What is more, Binta's engagement in the forbidden sexual relationship with the twenty-six year old man, Reza shows how male dominant tradition, which has been informed by Islamic principles, is being shaken in Nigerian Hausa society. Binta has married Zubairu when she is very young even without knowing who Zubairu is. She has been compelled to be engaged in the arranged marriage by leaving school so that she has lived with her late husband, Zubairu not because she loves him, but because she is expected to do so by patriarchy. Thereby, Binta has not considered sex as an expression of love, so she has had frustrating sexual life with her husband as she thinks that she has been doing sex with Zubairu just to fulfill the wifely duty.

When Binta has sexual intercourse with her husband, Zubairu, "she would count slowly under her breath, her eyes closed, of course. And somewhere between sixty and seventy always between sixty and seventy he would grunt, empty himself and roll off her until he was ready to go again" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 50). This implies that Binta has no interest to her husband, but she has been sleeping with him to meet patriarchy's expectation of married women to be sexually passive and submissive to their husbands. In such a tradition, men are the initiators of sex and set the conditions for the sexual encounter so that women are expected to satisfy the sexual desires of their husbands (Kambarami, 2006). As a result, Binta has never had a pleasant sexual life with Zubairu, but her sexual engagement with Reza has been desirable and she enjoys:

> She wanted Reza, of that there was no doubt. She craved what they had. It mattered to her that at the twilight of her sexual life, her desires had finally been unleashed...And all these people, including her niece, who had no inkling of the lifetime of deprivation she had endured, now looked at her with eyes that gleamed with accusations...when she would have to make a choice between who she was and who she wanted to be. That she had to confront these choices so late in her life was lamentable. But, in the final analysis, there was really only one option – an end to the affair, a new beginning for her, elsewhere, far away. But once Reza called her, not long after Subhi, to announce his imminent arrival, she knew she did not have the strength to go through with her decision (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 265).

Binta seems to be a conservative Muslim as she always fears and regrets for her relation with Reza because she has been condemned by her friends and even by her children. However, she knows that the pleasure she is enjoying now results from her affiliation with the young Reza. Thus, she is in intra-personal conflict that she must choose either her dignity or her excitement. That is, whether she terminates her affair with Reza and regains the honor she lost or continues the affair and enjoys the life she has always wanted to satisfy her sexual yearning. Although she decides to choose the former, she is unable to remain with her decision when Reza calls her. This confirms that Binta's attitude towards sexual relation has been changed from what she perceives having sexual intercourse with a man as fulfillment of the cultural demand to please her husband to having it for her own satisfaction.

This implies that Binta neglects her traditional society's culture that prohibits old women to make sexual relation with young men. Binta's mode of resistance to such oppression does not openly confront the tradition as she secretly meets her objective as well as she does not harshly defend herself from her friends' unremitting criticisms. She has never confronted her accusers, but by systematically ignoring all condemnations, as the narrator says, "Hajiya Binta Zubairu was finally born at fifty five when a dark-lipped rogue with short, spiky hair, like a field of miniscule anthills, scaled her fence and landed boots and all, in the puddle that was her heart" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 9). Consequently, Binta consciously or unconsciously challenges oppressive attitude that seizes her back from sexual enjoyment, and thus at her fifty-fifth year, she deconstructs the religious and patriarchal dogma. Although Binta's act sacrifices her only son, it calls for social transformation where such repressive thoughts and practices need to be changed.

5.2.4 Importance of Marriage

In many African cultures, marriage is sacred and a married woman is treated with respect (Kambarami, 2006; Nnaemeka, 2005; Oyewumi, 2003). Whatever lazy a man is, women want to persist their marriage because man and woman are seen as binary complementary in African culture unlike Western feminism that considers female and male as binary opposites. The marriage issue is reflected in *Season of Crisom Blossoms* when Binta's daughter "Hureira, her intemperate daughter, had returned, crying that she had been divorced by her good-for-nothing husband" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 9). In many parts of the novel, Hureira is depicted as resistant to patriarchal

oppression, but she seeks the life of non-oppressive wifehood; hence, she detests patriarchal suppression but not men.

Even though Hureira gets married for the second time, she abandons her husband and comes home to live with her mother. She refuses to go back to her husband when her mother, brother and sister advise her to do so. At first, even she is not willing to speak to him on telephone. However, Hureira becomes nervous and decides to go back when he tells her, "I'm taking a second wife…she suddenly burst into tears, crying inconsolably" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 223). Hureira seeks to sustain her marriage so that she does not hate her husband rather she hates domination. Hureira seriously urges her husband that she will die if he marries another woman that the narrator states, "Hureira had told her husband she would rather drink a gallon of poison and set herself ablaze than have him take a second wife" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 267). Her refusal to go back home is not from her true heart, rather she pretends as if she does not want husband, but she intends him to give her more attention if she resists going back. When she learns that he is desperately annoyed by her departure and consequently decides to have another wife instead of begging her, she portrays her real feeling. This feeling connotes that Hureira knows how marriage is important in her life, and thus the novel underscores the important place of marriage to African women.

Binta also recognizes the importance of a man in a woman's life when she urges Hadiza to convince Hureira saying, "You should talk to your sister Hureira. I fear she might end up ruining her second marriage just as she did with the first one" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 55). This signifies that marriege requires tolerance and negotiation so that Binta worries about her intolerant daughter. As a result, Binta forces Hureira to go back to her husband. By understanding a man's significance in woman's life, Binta strives to sustain her daughter's marriage as she consistently advises her.

Binta practically knows the role of man in her life as she sustains her relation with Reza. Binta leads a comfortable life for her well to do son, Munkaila fulfills her material needs, but she is not happy. Since her husband has died, she has been leading life without man. When she starts the relationship with Reza, she begins to taste pleasant life even though she worries about the correctness of the relationship with a man whose body is "reminding her how young he was, and how old she had become" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 57). However, Binta wants to endure the liaison because it gives her excitement that she has never got before. She often decides to end the affair in fear of the community's subjugation, but she continues the relation in an ambivalent way.

Furthermore, Binta's daughter, Hadiza contemplates that her mother's continuous uneasiness is a result of loneness when she questions that "was it possible that her mother was just lonely? How had she endured a decade without a man?" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 21). Hence, she suggests that Binta may lead a happy life if she remarries and tries to convince her brother Munkaila arguing that "I am a woman and I know how important it is to have a man around" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 31). Hence, Hadiza also understands that engagement with a man (husband) is an important means that enables her mother to withdraw her long-lasting grief. This justifies African feminist view, which validates that maleness and femaleness are complementary to each other so that men's lives remain incomplete without women and vice-versa (Ezeaku, 2014). In sum, *Season of Crisom Blossoms* underlines the significance of making a cooperative relationship between men and women to alleviate all problems they encounter throughout their lives.

5.2.5 Rewards of Motherhood

In African feminism, motherhood is conceived as a great gift that every woman wants to maintain. Anthony and Kolawole (2014) contend that "a woman is worth anything if she becomes a mother, a symbol of greatness and height of womanhood" (p. 127). Unlike the Western feminist degradation of motherhood, African feminism celebrates a woman's role of childbearing and considers it as a blessing so that when a woman gives birth, it has been considered as a reward rather than punishment since love and treatment the mother is offered by her children pleases her much and brings social respect to her life. *Season of Crimson Blossoms* also shows how motherhood is praised and favored in North Nigerian Hausa tradition. Mu'azu Aminu, Fa'iza's father has special love for her because she looks like his mother:

> Fa'iza was born and placed in her father's tender hands. He looked at her, at her button nose and beady eyes, and his own eyes welled up with tears. 'She has my mother's eyes.' She was named after his mother, who had died after years of waiting in vain to welcome her grandchildren. When Fa'iza was still a child, her father would hoist her onto his shoulders and walk round the neighborhood, introducing her as his mother to everyone they met…Even when she was thirteen, her father still offered her choice pieces of meat from his soup while Jamilu fumed (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 73).

Aminu gives special privilege to his daughter, Fa'iza, rather than his son, Jamilu. However, in patriarchal society, fathers prefer son to daughter, but Aminu is excited when the girl is born. However, he is happy not because she is a girl but for she looks like his mother. All the love and treatment that he offers to Fa'iza is what he would like to offer to his late mother. This designates that a mother deserves limitless love and care from her children, so being a mother is being loved and treated in an adorable manner.

Similarly, Binta gets unreserved care from her children despite having her own means of income. For instance, her son Munkaila wants "his mother living out her days in contented grace. In the fashion of a queen mother" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 30). This suggests that a mother is highly honored and valued by her children and this brings to her societal respect and recognition. Nevertheless, if she fails to abide for her society's expectation, she disgraces her children as we have seen above from Munkaila's death trying to restore his mother's honor. This clearly justifies Nnaemeka's (2005) contention that "the arguments that are made for motherhood in the African texts are based not on motherhood as a patriarchal institution but motherhood as an experience ("mothering") with its pains and rewards" (p. 5). Moreover, Leila, who is kidnaped by Reza, tells him that she has an inherent affection to her mother when she begs him to release her:

> 'I would like to see my mother again.' There were tears, not in her eyes but in her voice, and it made Reza stop and look back. I hope you will find it in your heart to let me go so I can see her again and tell her I love her.' He stood by the door wondering about the bond between mothers and their children, something he knew he would never fully understand (Ibrahim, 2016, pp. 245-246).

Reza and his friends attempt to kill a businessperson, Alhaji Bakori's son who has been with his cousin, Leila upon the order of the Senator, but the man escapes, and Leila is kidnaped. Until Reza gets orders from the Senator who hires him, he keeps her under his control. Thus, the girl begs him many times, but he refuses. She understands that every person whether female or male loves and pities to his/her mother, so she pleads him in the name of her mother. Leila's apprehension is more for her mother than her present condition. Reza also clearly knows that the connection between a mother and a child never breaks under whatever circumstance the child or the mother is. Although Reza pretends that he does not love his mother for she abandons him, his hatred is not from his true heart as he unconsciously reflects his love and longing for her. His attraction to Binta is

initiated because he likens her to his mother that we learn when he says, "I robbed this woman who reminded me of my mother…just like my mother" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 38).Thus, he has returned all things that he robbed from Binta for she prompts his unconscious love to his mother. It is not only children's love to their mothers that we learn from *Season of Crisom Blossoms* but also mothers' countless affection and care towards their children. For example, Hureira recognizes the joy of motherhood when "she remembered the first time she looked at this child of hers…and understood what the joy of being a mother really meant" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 121). It means that mother's love is unconditional and endless. Even when a child dies long, his/her mother always remembers him/her and grieves her entire life. This is what Binta shows us when she has been relentlessly thinking about her late son, Yaro:

> She fell back on the bed, called him by his birth name and told him she was sorry while she wept. That she wished she had told him she loved him even once. That she wished she could have just one more minute so she could tell him that and keep him close to her bosom where no bullet would find him (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 260).

Yaro died fifteen years ago, but Binta never forgets him. She regrets that she has not properly shown her deep-hearted love to him because her patriarchal culture does not allow her to do that. Since Yaro has passed away, she has been thinking of him with a broken heart. Besides, Binta is first attracted to Reza because he resembles Yaro. "She knew then that her search for Yaro in the eyes of a stranger" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 54). Ibrahim's demonstration of motherhood in this novel underlines African feminists' consideration of motherhood as one of the most valuable requirements of African womanhood because motherhood in African cultures has been rewarded and praised regardless of a mother's social class.

In conclusion, *Season of Crimson Blossoms* explores many principles of African feminism such as disclosing patriarchal injustice, calling for social transformation, maintaining complementary relationship between men and women, authorizing motherhood. Nevertheless, Ibrahim (2016) does not represent women as winners and self-reliant. Although many female characters of the novel challenge patriarchal suppression that is maintained by Islam, they are dependent on men or society in many ways. There is no economically independent female character in the novel. Although Ibrahim discloses multiple roots of women's oppression and deals with many agreeable issues of African feminism, his characterization of women remains unprogressive.

Chapter Six: African Feminism in Southern African Novels

This chapter presents analyses of the novels selected from Southern African region. Unlike Eastern, Western, Central and Northern regions of the continent, countries in Southern region such as South Africa and Zimbabwe gained independence later (Abiye, 1998; Chigwedere, 2015; Melakneh, 2008). From Southern African region, South Africa and Zimbabwe are known for the prevalence Anglophone African literature in general and novels in particular so that they represent this region of the continent in this dissertation. Thus, this chapter provides African feminist analyses of the South African novel, *Coconut* and Zimbabwean novel, *The Hairdresser of Harare* in their respective order.

6.1 Plot Summary of *Coconut* (2008)

Matlwa's *Coconut* was first published in 2007, but in this research, I use the second edition, which was published in 2008. The novel contains two parts and is narrated from the first person point of view by two young female characters: the first part by Ofilwe and the second part by Fikile. Ofilwe is from a privileged black family who lives in the part of city that was formerly exclusive for white people. Thus, she expends her childhood life with white people and learns in white schools. Although Ofilwe loves white culture and people, her brother, Tshepo repeatedly advises her to stop accompanying her white school friends because he thinks that the friends do not truly want her. Ofilwe has been thinking that she is a fluent speaker of English until three white men who come to her school disprove it. Learning from the practical experiences, Ofilwe begins to think that she is different from white people. Hence, she starts refusing her friends invitation and even stops meeting with her childhood friend, Belinda. Concomitantly, she becomes skeptical about the supremacy of Western cultural values over indigenous African ones. Thereupon, she strives to know the pre-colonial African religion and cultural values, and begins to learn her indigenous language, Sepedi.

Another female character, Fikile recounts part two of the novel. Fikile is an orphan girl who leads a dreadful life with an unnamed character she calls Uncle. She is grown up in the hands of her regretful uncle who leads a hand to mouth life in a rented room due to the death of her mother when she was very young and she does not know her father. Nevertheless, Fikile has a dream that she calls "Project Infinity" through which she believes her problems will be solved one day and

she will be rich, white and happy. On the other hand, she drops secondary school and begins to work as waitress at Silver Spoon Coffee Shop where Ofilwe's family always comes. Fikile considers all white people wealthy and impressive; whereas blacks as poor and ugly. Henceforth, she never respects black people particularly, black men considering them as rapists and thieves. At work, she prefers to serve white people particularly new customers whom she calls "virgins" but hates serving black clients including Ofilwe's family. Nevertheless, a white man who is a new customer of the coffee house nags Fikile when she tells him that smoking is not allowed there, but he also misinforms the owner that Fikile has allowed him to smoke there. Due to this, the owner expels Fikile from the job.

6.1.1 Post-apartheid Women and Identity

South Africa had been under colonial oppression through apartheid, which was the policy of compulsory separation of black and white people in every sphere of life. Apartheid had been preaching racial and cultural superiority of the European people over South African indigenous counterparts (Abiye, 1998; Melakneh, 2008; Scott, 2012). This has been one of the colonial strategies to suppress the colonized people through binary opposition, black versus white. Western feminists have implemented the colonial use of stereotypical binary oppositions that separate whiteness from blackness in order to subjugate African women along with their identities and cultural traditions (Mikell, 1997; Oyewumi, 2003).

Many African people have internalized this stereotypical projection of African people in general and women in particular in this post-colonial era. For that reason, "the search for cultural identity is one of the fundamental concerns in the majority of significant works of African fiction and hence occupies a central place in the writers' quest for exposing the authentic African personality and the pressing influences on the psyche" (Brar & Singh, 2011, p. 469). Matlwa (2008), in *Coconut* clearly reveals identity problems of post-apartheid South African young generation, particularly Black girls/women who dwell in cities.

Matlwa deliberately uses the title of the novel, "Coconut" because in post-apartheid South Africa, the term *Coconut* is derogatory and is used to describe people who are black but speak and act like white people (Scott, 2012). Ofilwe comparatively talks about the hairstyles of Sponono, a black girl and Kate, a white girl:

> Sponono, in a burdensomely layered satin floral dress, sits silently beside her mother, running her fingers through the knotted mess of a little girl's desires. An old and tattered woolen hair-band makes shapes of eight into and out of the blackness…Kate Jones had the most beautiful hair I had ever seen in all my eight years of life...Her heavy and soft hair, curled slightly at its ends, would make proud swishes as she rolled around the playground (Matlwa, 2008, p. 8).

Ofilwe is a black girl who reflects the colonial ideology that subjugates black women. By undermining the hairstyle of the black girl, Sponono, Ofliwe praises the white girl, Kate's hair. This indicates that in post-apartheid South Africa, white supremacy continues. In this connection, Oyewumi (2003) contends that whiteness had/has been seen as a standard of good qualities while blackness is of bad qualities. When the concept comes to beauty, white women's body, hair and physical appearance had/ have been ideally projected as beautiful and attractive; whereas, black/ colonized women's hair, body structure and entire appearance had/have been portrayed as ugly and horrific. Even though the colonizers left the political power to indigenous African people, the racist ideology that they had buried in the minds of the colonized people effectively works in the post-colonial context (Ngugi, 1993). Ofilwe undermines herself even if the white girl, Kate appreciates her black hairstyle.

> I still do not know whether it was earnest, malicious, or out of some sort of contorted curiosity but Kate asked me one day, during Music, if I could plait her hair into thin plaits like the braids that adorned my head. She said my braids were pretty and that she wished she could have hair just like mine so she could be as beautiful as I was. Flabbergasted, I smiled a very broad smile, endeavoring to process the words (Matlwa, 2008, p. 11).

Ofilwe considers herself as inferior to the white girl because she has been very astonished when the white girl, Kate tells her that her black hairstyle is beautiful and she wishes to have a similar style to look as beautiful as Ofilwe. In contrast, Ofilwe has already convinced herself that everything that the white people have is superior over what black people possess. However, Ofilwe gives a middle position to herself as she compares and contrasts herself with other black

people. In her view, even though she is black, she is different from other black people for she embraces the white culture and speaks English fluently by ignoring her own language, Sepedi:

> I am smart and speak perfect English. That is why people treat me differently. I knew from a very young age that Sepedi would not take me far. Not a chance! I observed my surroundings and noted that all those who were lawyers, doctors and accountants, all the movie stars that wore beautiful dresses, all the singers that drove fancy cars and all my friends who owned the latest clothing, did not speak the language that bounced berserkly from Koko to Tshepo to Malome Arthur to Mama and back to Koko again. I did not care if I could not catch it (Matlwa, 2008, pp. 59-60).

Ofilwe's disregard for indigenous languages and people contradicts to African feminists' notions of respecting one's culture and people. Ofilwe, in the above extract maintains the colonial ideology that considers Western language and culture as civilized, whereas African ones as backward. Even those black elites in the country have subjugated their own language and embraced English. Taking the black elites and celebrates who reject their indigenous, Sepedi and instead embrace English as a model, Ofilwe's little mind captures that speaking English fluently is a sign of civilization while speaking Sepedi is a sign of backwardness.

Ngugi (1993) argues that proper decolonization can only be realized when African people are able to understand that English has degraded many indigenous languages and cultures in its journey to control the privileged status around the world. Although Ofilwe's mother, Gemina wants to preserve some of African traditional values, Ofilwe's identity problem also seems to be inherited from her family because she says, "Our family worships Silver Spoon's Traditional English Breakfast" (Matlwa, 2008, p. 27). This is due to the fact that cultural assimilation had/has been one of the colonial agenda in which indigenous cultural traditions had/have been suppressed and replaced by the culture of colonizers so that upper and middle class elites are the most vulnerable to such identity crisis (Melakneh, 2012). Ofilwe's parents belong to the post-apartheid middle class who inherit the privileged life of the colonizers and lead a comfortable life unlike many of their black counterparts in post-colonial South Africa. Astoundingly, Ofilwe's grandmother remains with unconditional love of the British royal family.

> Grandmother Tlou took a week off from work at the Department of Education after she had heard the news of the sudden death of Diana, Princess of Wales... Grandmother Tlou apparently announced that she would no longer be attending meals for the next three days as a sign of respect for the passing of the great princess…Although Daddy chided Grandmother Tlou for appearing to be more devastated over the death of the princess than that of her own husband four years earlier (Matlwa, 2008, p. 25).

The quotation metaphorically reveals that those women who internalize the colonial ideology give more value to colonizers than to their own family members. Tlou's inexorable grief towards the British princess, who had been exploiting her South Africa's rich resources and dehumanizing her fellow Africans, ironically justifies how colonized people have been mentally contaminated by colonial ideology so that they remain colonized. In other words, Tlou's minimal bereavement to her husband symbolizes the colonized people's dignity and respect towards their own indigenous people and cultural values. In this relation, Scott (2012) contends that the post-colonial South African policy of non-racialism has not necessarily helped in deconstructing the category of whiteness. Accordingly, it is difficult to achieve full emancipation unless the colonized mind is decolonized. If Ofilwe's family mind had been fully decolonized, they would have not praised whiteness, and then Ofilwe would have equally or more admired her own indigenous language and values. This is the reason that African feminists focus on family centeredness while dealing with the emancipation process of African women and their respective societies from suppression. Fully liberated parents liberate their children along with their society from neo/colonial and sexual oppressions (Nnaemeka, 2005).

Correspondingly, another black female character, Fikile has a negative attitude towards her black race. She badly undermines black people while flattering whiteness as she says, "I do not want to be: black, dirty and poor. This bucket can be a daily motivator for me to keep me working towards where I will someday be: white, rich and happy" (Matlwa, 2008, p. 93). Similar with Ofilwe, in Fikile's mind, black and white are binary oppositions where blackness is associated with bad while whiteness with good. Related to this, Scott (2012) maintains that whiteness could be perceived in three dimensions. First, it is a location of structural advantage of race privilege. Second, it is a perspective, a place from which white people look at black people, at others, and at

society. Third, whiteness refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed. Internalization of these three dimensions of whiteness leads Fikile to create a false identity of herself. As a human being, Fikile can be wealthy and happy if she works hard, but practically she can never be white even though these days' surgery can bring slight change on one's color. Fikile's deep rooted hatred towards blackness and admiration of whiteness is further maintained when she introduces herself to the kitchen staffs of Silver Spoon Cafe:

> My name is Fiks Twala. I have a second name, Fikile, which I never use because many find it too difficult to pronounce and, I must admit, I really do like Fiks better. I grew up in white environments for the most part of my life, from primary school right through to high school. Many people think I am foreign, from the UK or somewhere. I think it is because my accent is so perfect and my manner so refined.... I never could relate to other black South Africans. We've just never clicked. So I give them their space and they generally give me mine. I lived in England for a while, Mummy and Daddy still lecture there (Matlwa, 2008, pp. 115-116).

The excerpt is about the false discourse that Fikile has created to associate herself with white people and culture. Fikile makes the wealthy white and able people as her models; on the other hand, she has generally degraded her own black South Africans as poor, dirty and incompetent. In reality, Fikile is a black orphan girl who says, "I never had a father and Mama was a drunkard and a coward who ran out on life, leaving me alone, drenched in her wretched blood. So really, if anybody is allowed to create make-believe parents, it's me" (Matlwa, 2008, p. 116). Instantly, Fikile is trying to define herself in relation to white, Western cultural tradition despite the fact that she is a black orphan who comes across economic problems that compel her to withdraw from school to be a waitress. The impact of colonialism continues although the colonizers left political power to indigenous South Africans.

Fikile appears to be antagonistic to the African feminist notion that advises any African woman to love and respect her family members. Fikile's Uncle has been very sympathetic to her as she says, "Uncle had always been kind to me" (Matlwa, 2008, p. 90). In addition, he takes the responsibility of bringing up her when her mother and grandmother have died as she narrates, "Uncle was the only one who was willing to take me in" (Matlwa, 2008, p. 91). Yet, she undermines him:

> The Kinsleys did so much for Uncle.... If only they had invested that money in me instead of Uncle. I knew I was clever, more clever than Uncle would ever be and more grateful...if I was given half the chance Uncle had been given, I would never have turned out to be a disappointment (Matlwa, 2008, pp. 97-98).

The Kinsleys is a White family where Uncle's mother and Fikile's grandmother, Gogo works as a maid. This family grants Uncle to learn in good schools by fulfilling all the requirements. In that way, Uncle completes secondary school, and this white family sends him to University of Cape Town so that he begins studying medicine; however, he fails to meet graduation, and thus he is dismissed from the University. This is the main reason that Fikile nags and undermines him even being dependent on him. She arrogantly considers herself as the cleverest girl and if she had been given the chance that Uncle has been granted, she would have been successful. Although Fikile's self-confidence is admired, it is against African cultural tradition to dehumanize one's family member who has paid necessary attention to her.

Furthermore, Fikile emasculates even wealthy blacks. For example, Ofilwe's parents or the Tlous are one of the black elite families who lead privileged life as white people do. Because the Tlous/Ofilwe's parents are economically privileged, they usually visit Silver Spoon Coffee Shop, which is predominantly visited by white people. However, Fikile says, "The Tlous. The family that I hate with everything in me…I do not serve the black families...I hate them so much" (Matlwa, 2008, p. 132). As a result, Fikile's character stands against African feminist agenda. That is, African feminism respects African people and culture in contrast to the colonial stereotypical postulation (Nnaemeka, 2003; Ogunyemi, 1985). Fikile fails to meet African feminists' vision of creating an African woman who gives respect to her own people and culture. Even more, Fikile's personality deviates from African feminists' notion of building respectful and cooperative relationship between men and women. For instance, she has been very arrogant when she converses with a black man, Mr. K.J. Fishwick whom she meets in train:

> Are you one of those thieving black men who just can't keep their hands off white men's property?'...'which poor white man did you steal that pretty little briefcase from, Mr Fishwick?' I ask, as I pull the magazine from his grasp. He does not respond...He turns away and looks out of the window for the rest of the ride (Matlwa, 2008, p. 105).

In Fikile's mind, all black people are poor and those who hold expensive things are thieves who steal from white people. Mr. K.J. Fishwick does not want to defend himself by nagging her back so that he keeps silent because he respects even arrogant women like Fikile. Indeed, Fikile considers all black men as criminals and rapists when she says, "The men disgust me. All of them are a bunch of criminals...They look at me like they want to rape me" (Matlwa, 2008, p. 101). Consciously or unconsciously, Fikile follows the trend of Western radical feminism. Western radical feminists consider every man as an enemy of women, and thus they do not want to have relations with men (Tyson, 2006). Similarly, Fikile stereotypically views all men as potentially harmful to women, and hence she does not want to make conversation with even polite and respectful men. However, the prominent African feminist, Nnaemeka (2003), advises women not to generalize that all men are potential rapists and wife-beaters so that Fikile deviates from the norm of African womanhood.

6.1.2 Women and Racial Oppression

Arndt (2002) observes that in Southern Africa, racial suppression has been one of the roots of women's marginalization, and hence contemporary Southern African feminist novels consider it as one of the central themes, while it "is not a main issue inside post-independence countries of most Western or Eastern Africa (p. 29). *Coconut* is one of such novels. The post-apartheid new constitution of South Africa grants equal rights to all citizens from any racial grouping to achieve the same kind of privilege formerly accessible only to white South Africans, but Black South Africans still face racial discrimination. Although this new constitution enables the black South African privileged people to dwell in the same compound with their white counterparts, the legacy of racial discrimination continues in post-colonial South Africa. Regardless of their economic and social class, white people have segregated the blacks.

Race based oppression of women is one of the main themes that Matlwa tries to show in *Coconut*. The Tlou family or Ofilwe's parents are depicted as one of the fortunate black people who can financially afford luxurious life that had been exclusive for white people. Due to this, Ofilwe's family often enjoys in the Silver Spoon Coffee Shop in which white customers are the majority. However, the white owner of the shop marginalizes Ofilwe's parents because of their black color as Ofilwe says, "We are regulars here at Silver Spoon, but are not chummy with Miss Becky, the owner, like the other regulars are" (Matlwa, 2008, p. 29). Miss Becky's subjugation of the Thlous

is not resulted from their economic background rather it is from their racial background, that is their blackness.

Likewise, in a private white school where she learns, Ofilwe has also been segregated by her friends because of blackness. One of the indicators of such discrimination is seen when Ofilwe expresses her love to her classmate, Mokoen, but he undermines her when he says: "I only date white girls" (Matlwa, 2007, p. 24). Moreover, while playing a kissing game, another boy, Clinton Mitchley refuses to kiss Ofilwe because "her lips are too dark!" (Matlwa, 2008, p .41). Mitchely strengthens the colonial master narrative that considers whiteness as standard of beauty and blackness as ugliness. This kind of racism severely affects Ofilwe's psychology as she sadly says, "I shifted back to my ready spot...whispering the words to myself (No ways! Her lips are too dark), not believing that they were spoken words...words that had been followed by an explosion of general laughter" (Matlwa, 2008, p. 41). Ofilwe has been associating herself with white people because of her parents' privileged economic class. However, she is different from her white classmates for being black. This disillusionment has greatly damaged her psychology.

Furthermore, although Ofilwe considers herself as identical with her white friends with respect to speaking English, she later learns that such association is false when she is asked to tell her own language in school by a white teacher Mrs. Kumalo. "'What language do you speak at home, Ofilwe?' asked Mrs Kumalo 'English, Mrs Kumalo,' I responded, confused... 'No, Ofilwe, what language do you speak to your mother and father?' insisted Mrs Kumalo. 'English, Mrs Kumalo,' I tried again" (Matlwa, 2008, pp. 49-50). Even though Ofilwe tries to copy the accent of the white people, she cannot exactly speak English as her white counterparts do. Mrs. Kumalo's subjugation of Ofilwe's English implies that black people are quite different from white ones even though they acquire similar economic status. That is, Ofilwe joins the white school where Mrs. Kumalo teaches because her parents acquire the same economic status with her white friends' parents, but because of her black color/ race, Mrs. Kumalo disproves her English. This again perpetuates the colonial/ neo-colonial stereotypical othering of black/ African people as inferior to white people.

What is more, another white male minor character subjugates Fikile in the Silver Spoon Coffee Shop as she narrates, "The one who lit a cigarette in the non-smoking section, the one who lied to Miss Becky about what happened, shouts, 'What is it with you and black girls! It's fucking embarrassing, dude!'" (Matlwa, 2008, p. 146). One of the two white men smokes cigarettes sitting

in a place where the Shop prohibits smoking neglecting Fikile's warning. Indeed, this man wrongly informs the owner of the Shop that Fikile allows him to smoke there that upsets the owner, and thus she terminates Fikile from the job. This man shows his racist attitude when his friend tries to ease her as he follows her. To this man, talking to the black girl is embarrassing for white men. This clearly indicates that still in the post-colonial context, indigenous South African women are segregated for being black.

Black African women are double oppressed one because of their sex and the other because of their color or race (Kolawole, 2004; Oyewumi, 2003). In order to avoid this kind of problem, and to fully liberate an African woman, racism and sexism should be eliminated at the same time (Phillips, 2006). Generally, Matlwa's *Coconut* discloses the persistence of race based segregation in post-apartheid South Africa where the white people and their culture sustain domination over black people and their culture. Such racist ideology in post-colonial African settings is one of the factors that compel African feminists to include the race issue in their struggle for liberation.

6.1.3 Representation of Post-apartheid Poverty

Matlwa (2008) also discloses post-apartheid poverty of South Africa through the female character Fikile. Fikle's evaluation of her uncle symbolizes post-colonial African political elites' failure to realize the anti-colonial expectation of African people. "He lay in bed for weeks sobbing and eating whatever Gogo put at his door and that was the end of it, the end of Uncle the smart one, the one who would save us" (Matlwa, 2008, p. 99). Fikile ironically reveals the break of the anti-colonial promises. Uncle symbolizes unfit and selfish post-colonial elites who had been expected to free their people from economic, social, cultural, racial and psychological problems. Fikile's hatred towards her black race is resulted from her real experience of the black people in post-independence South Africa. This is why African feminism considers post-colonial poverty as one of the most important issues of African gender discourses.

Even though Black South African elites took the political power from the colonizers, white people remain to secure their economic and cultural superiority for the black political elites fail to change the miserable life of the black people, and the black elites themselves practically lead the Western life style (Hlongwane, 2013). This induces Fikile to identify herself in association with the privileged white people. She underlines this saying, "I have never been able to relate to other

blacks...Uncle and his laziness, the dirty kids at school, I understood none of that" (Matlwa, 2008, p. 116). Gogo, Fikile's grandmother is the servant of a white family and her uncle is the son of Gogo who "failed dismally and was excluded from the medical school at the University of Cape Town because he was an idiot" (Matlwa, 2008, p. 100). Thus, one of the causes of Fikile's identity crisis can be the dreadful life conditions of black South Africans in post-colonial context. In other words, the life of post-apartheid South African black people and women remains miserable while the white people maintain their cultural hegemony.

Moreover, Fikile complains about the way black South Africans remain poor relating with her personal life. She states, "Having recently dropped out of high school on a whim with no money and no means of making any, I did not know how I was going to get my hands on a pair of black jeans and nearly lost the job for showing up at work twice 'incorrectly attired" (Matlwa, 2008, p. 94). Although South Africa gained its political independence as black South African elites have taken prominent government leadership positions, the economic domination of white people continues. Particularly, black South African women still suffer from poverty as Fikile's evaluation reveals. "Women…bore me with the stories about their harsh white bosses at work or the long tales of their various illnesses, aches and pains" (Matlwa, 2008, p. 101). Fikile's observation shows that Black South African women live in agony because the white people who employ them and control the economic power of the country have marginalized and oppressed them.

Ofilwe also makes similar remarks on how the black people in post-apartheid South Africa suffer describing that "even amongst the poor there are those who are poor and even amongst the lower class there are those who are lower class" (Matlwa, 2008, p. 58). This implies that black people in post-colonial South Africa cannot only be relegated by deep-rooted poverty but also by class based segregations even among the blacks. As there are the poorest of the poor, the class differences may lead those who are at the most bottom class to be exploited by the poor blacks who are in a relatively better class as well as by those wealthy including the white dwellers of the nation. It is possible to suggest that the worst scenario happens to black poorest women and this triples their oppression. That is, being black, poor, and women, they are subjected to threefold suppression. Thus, Matlwa's novel reveals that the so-called independence failed to bring development to South African women in particular and black people by extension.

What is more, *Coconut* reveals that in post-apartheid South Africa, black women those who belong to the privileged economic class remain dependent on their husbands. For example, Ofilwe's father, John is the source of income for the family expenditure. He is the one who pays even the bills of the family in the hotel as Ofilwe says, "Fikile tells us that our bill is ready, and that she will return in a 'sec' to collect our payment. Daddy is in the men's room so Mama smiles a nod at Fikile. Daddy will pay when he returns" (Matlwa, 2008, p. 33). Here, Gemina's smile for the waitress confirms that she does not have many to pay as she is dependent on her husband. Despite the fact that Ofilwe describes, "Mama is a nurse and makes sick people better at this one hospital" (Matlwa, 2008, p. 91), Gemina's has dropped the job and become a housewife:

> Daddy hands over his bankcard to Mama so that she can draw out her money for the week. When Daddy decided, two or three years ago, that nursing was too demanding for his apparently overworked wife, who he believed would be better off spending her time... raising their potentially wayward children, they agreed that he would give her a weekly allowance to cover her daily expenses (Matlwa, 2008, p. 56).

Stratton (1994) asserts that African education system has not been friendly to women as it is framed in European manner that is intended to prepare girls to be servants. As the above extract shows, Gemina becomes nurse where she takes care of patients, which is routine and indeed wearisome work. Yet, John is a computer professional who earns a lot of money so that he maintains his power to be the sole income earner for the family. In spite of the profession's tediousness, Gemina has had her own source of income, but John persuades her to drop it and become dependent on him. Briefly, *Coconut* uncovers how black South African women and their societies have been suffering due to poverty in post-apartheid South Africa where the black political elites rule. Hence, Matlwa claims that independence does not bring favorable environment to women and Black South Africans.

6.1.4 Women and Homecoming

Fanon (1968) contends that in order to abandon colonial and European legacies, there should be a new path for progress that is entirely different and independent of the Europeans. That is, the colonized mind should totally ignore the colonial/ neo-colonial legacy in order to achieve full decolonization. Many African feminists such as (Ezeigbo, 2007; Kolawole, 2004; Nnaemeka,

2003; Ogunyemi, 1985; Oyewumi, 2003) share the above idea of Fanon and therefore, they strive to alter their gender discourse from Western feminism and base it on indigenous philosophies and methodologies of African women or people. *Coconut* also underlines the need to reject colonial/ neo-colonial values and to preserve indigenous traditional values of African people through characterization of Ofilwe. The analysis made under 6.1.1 indicates that Ofilwe has identity problems for she praises whiteness and undermines blackness. However, Ofilwe latter begins to go back home by questioning her place in the white environment as she wretchedly narrates:

> I hate my ears, for they are the greatest liars I have ever known. They lie to me every day. As soon as I speak a word they play it back to me in an accent that is not my own. Perhaps my ears are thieves too. 'Whose accent is this?' I demand to know (Matlwa, 2008, p. 58).

Ofilwe latter learns that she has been trying to express her identity in relation to white culture and personality, which is quite different from and unlike her as she is actually black. This is because as Ngugi (1986) states that the colonial legacy has continued through mind colonization since the colonized people have been relegating their own culture, language, and identity while embracing the colonizers ones in post-colonial contexts. Such supremacy of colonial legacy continues to the present and most possibly to the future unless the colonized ones are committed to decolonize their mind. In accordance with this, Ofilwe realizes that she has been in identity problem while trying to imitate the white people's accent. In addition, Tshepo, Ofilwe's elder brother, plays an important role in shaping her identity as he advises her to depart from her white friends:

> Ofilwe, know your name. Friends ask where you come from and are curious about what language you and yours speak. Friends get to know your family…Friends do not scoff at your beliefs, friends appreciate your customs, friends accept you for who you really are (Matlwa, 2008, p. 43).

Ofilwe's elder brother, Tshepo understands that even though black people are from the same economic class with white people, the white people are racist and always undermine and segregate the blacks. As a result, Tshepo continuously advises Ofilwe to quit her friendship with white girls as well as to stop going to the white people's party. He convinces her and she now thinks that her assumption of Western culture as civilized has been wrong and rubbish. "I told myself I was

throwing out all the garbage in my life when I rejected their invitations" (Matlwa, 2008, p. 47). Besides, Tshepo tells her that Christianity is the Western product, which is imposed on black people. He says, "It is like advertising. You market a product well enough and anybody will buy it" (Matlwa, 2008, p. 11). Tshepo is clearly aware of racism and questions the universality of Western values. Hence, he influences his sister to be skeptic about white values and culture that she has embraced since her childhood. This assures the argument that in African feminism, the relationship between a black man and a black woman is significantly different from the relationship between a white man and a white woman, and because the white woman battles the white man for subjugating her. Whereas, the black woman battles all-oppressive forces that subjugate her, her children and the black man in collaboration with men (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994; Ogunyemi, 1985). This means that men and women need to stand harmoniously against all suppressive practices and attitudes towards them.

In this situation, Tshepo's disillusionment about white people's religion that was brought to Africa by missionaries, devalued the indigenous cultures and belief systems leads Ofilwe to quest her root. For that reason, Ofilwe strives to know whether her ancestors had their own belief systems when she asks her mother, "But surely we had our own traditional rites, a name for our God, a form of worship? Whatever happened to that?" (Matlwa, 2008, p. 14). Here, Ofilwe is certain that her pre-colonial ancestors had their own God and their own unique worshipping traditions, and this indicates that she is going back to her own home culture questioning the hegemony of white people's culture and religion. The awareness leads Ofilwe to questions, "Do all South Africans think in English?" (Matlwa, 2008, p. 49). She feels embarrassed for her rejection of her ancestors' tradition and language. Consequently, she begins to learn her native language, Sepedi as she says:

> I decided not so long ago to take it a word at a time. The plan was that in every spoken sentence I would try to use a single word of Sepedi. Just like an athlete, I would gradually increase the workload until eventually I would be strong and fluent (Matlwa, 2008, p. 56).

Since Ofilwe endeavors to learn her ancestors' language, she maintains Ngugi (1986)'s notion that traditional African cultures are carried and understood through indigenous languages so that Ofilwe fastens her journey towards knowing and preserving her own traditional culture and values

dropping the colonial ones. As a result, the experience of racism that she encounters from white people and her brother's dedicated creation of awareness and advice bring Ofilwe back home so that now she overcomes the guilt of identity crisis and proudly says, "Me, happy to be me" (Matlwa, 2008, p. 52). Thus, she confidently embraces her indigenous cultural traditions as the proper expression of her identity and possession. In sum, under this theme, Matlwa seems to convey that post-apartheid identity crisis of black South African women and their society in general can be resolved through the systematic depiction of the effects of colonial power and its legacy and creating a platform through which individuals come to realize the main root of their problems. Consequently, they can come back home by themselves as the characterization of Ofilwe illustrates.

6.1.5 Depiction of Motherhood

Matlwa's *Coconut* represents motherhood as a multi-dimensional personality that involves nurturing and coaching, negotiation and compromise, and resistance and protection. Related with nurturing and coaching, African mothers are perceived as teachers of their children as they guide their children to understand and exhibit their societies' norms and values. In this way, Ofilwe's mother, Gemina has instructed her daughter to hold her own traditions:

> Tomorrow is the 28th of September, the day of Tim Browning's sleep-over party. I'm sure they will all be dancing the night away, while I sit in the middle of nowhere doing a whole bunch of fat nothing. Mama says I can't go…She says that we are leaving for the funeral tomorrow morning (the 28th of September!)…My mother tells me, it is respect, Ofilwe...We must be there at the funeral. Hmm? All of us must be there. These things are of immense importance. Very very great importance. We appreciate each other. We support each other (Matlwa, 2008, p. 13).

Respectfulness and collaborative social life have been praised as valuable African cultural tradition so that many African feminists strive to maintain while dealing with African gender issues. In this regard, African societies in general and women in particular should own the culture of respect to each other and help each other both in happy and sad times. A funeral ceremony is given due respect and availing oneself can be taken as respect to the dead and sharing the grief of the deceased one's family. Hence, Gemina forces her daughter to take part in a funeral rather than

going to a Western party. Besides, Gemina shapes her daughter to be respectful towards elders when Ofilwe greets Gemina's friends with an informal word "Hi":

> When I did exactly that, Mama looked at me in horror as if I had sworn at them. Later, she'd complain to my grandmother. 'It is a great embarrassing, Koko. Hayi! You should have been here to hear your little Ofilwe. Those women are my elders, not even I would speak with them in such a manner...'Hi'. It's not right, Koko. What kind of children am I raising? (Matlwa, 2008, p. 24).

The quotation indicates that Gemina gives great respect to African traditional values. As a result, she prefers to bring up her daughter in a way that she dignifies such values despite the fact that the cultural environment in which they live is fully surrounded by white culture for Ofilwe's family lives in a place where economically privileged white people dwell. Gemina justifies African feminists' contention that African mothers are transmitters of cultures from generation to generation (Nnaemeka, 2005; Stratton, 1994). Matlwa also stresses that motherhood requires negotiation and compromise. Nnaemeka (2003) argues that negotiation and compromise has been practiced in many cultures of African societies as a mode of resistance to suppression. African mothers have long experience of marinating their marriage through tolerance, negotiation and compromising some of their interest for the sake of their children. Koko, Ofilwe's grandmother forces Gemina to be tolerant in her deal with her husband, John because of her children:

> Divorce? You must never. Do not be selfish, Gemina. You must think, my child. Think. Use your head. Huh, Gemina? Have you forgotten your responsibilities, Gemina? You have two young children… you must for them care. Two. Where do you think you will go if you leave John? Back home? Where, Gemina? Where do you have to go? What will become of all of you? Huh? Nothing. Without him, my girl, you is nothing.' (Matlwa, 2008, p. 17).

In the above text, Koko urges Gemina that she should tolerate and negotiate with her husband instead of seeking divorce. Even though Koko understands that John oppresses Gemina, she claims that her daughter should compromise the problem not to disturb her children noting that motherhood is an altruistic obligation. As many African feminists agree that motherhood has both pain and pleasure, a mother should be prepared to face pain as she seeks the pleasure of

motherhood (Nnaemeka, 2005). Koko claims that regardless of her own comfort, Gemina should maintain her home for the sake of her children aborting her idea of divorce that feasibly creates chaos in the lives of the children. Another point that Koko upholds in the above extract is the complementarity of husband and wife. Thus, her comment goes to both Gemina and John that both remain incomplete without the other so that instead of running for divorce they should maintain their marriage through negotiation and compromise even though Koko's message is not directly addressed to John, Ofilwe's father.

Moreover, Matlwa depicts motherhood as a mode of resistance and protection. John, Ofilwe's father opposes his son Tshepo's choice to take "Bachelor of Arts Majoring in African Literature and Languages' and not Actuarial Science, which Daddy and he had agreed upon" (Matlwa, 2008, p. 82). John is Westernized man whose every activity reflects Western culture and way of life rather than African despite his black color. Tshepo gradually understands that Western culture has been distracting indigenous African ones and his father is one of the victims of identity crisis in post-colonial South Africa as he responds to his father, "I want to speak. I want to say those things that people are afraid to hear" (Matlwa, 2008, p. 82) pointing that his father is one of those who feel ashamed to express their indigenous cultures and identities. Consequently, Tshepo rejects his father's proposal and follows his own way.

This upsets John as he says, "You disgrace me, Tshepo" (Matlwa, 2008, p. 83). Nonetheless, Gemina encourages Tshepo to follow his interest when she confronts John saying, "Leave the boy, John. They is young, John. Let them dream... He is got talent and he is success in anything he is doing" (Matlwa, 2008, p. 83). Although Gemina's educational background is related with health science, she recognizes Tshepo's talent in literature as well his commitment to restore the lost indigenous traditions, she safeguards him from his father's imposition. In contrast to Western feminists' stereotypical subjugation of African women as submissive to their husbands, here Matlwa depicts Gemina as an active protector of her child from his father's patriarchal influence. This maintains African feminists' claim that African mothers are not submissive to patriarchal domination; rather they are the protectors of their children and society in addition to defending themselves from oppression (Nnaemeka, 2005; Oyewumi, 2003).

6.1.6 Optimistic View of Future

One of the premises of African feminism is that African women are always hopeful and see things optimistically (Ogunyemi, 1985). This notion is depicted in *Coconut* through Fikile. Fikile is a poor girl whose parents' died, and hence she is forced to lead a despondent life with her regretful uncle. Until she is twelve years and grade seven, she has been sleeping on the same bed with her uncle, but since she has been informed about rape from school, she has been sleeping on solid floor for about five years, but she dreams about a bright future despite her present agony saying:

> I have been sleeping on this floor for five years now...And now it is only my neck that continues to groan and moan, the rest of my body has gotten quite used to the floor. Of course, things will not be this way forever. Someday I will own a king-sized bed with a solid-wood headboard dressed in decorative ironwork and red leather with a large foot-end kist filled with little gold cushions and decadent fabrics…I will still cover it with lots of soft and cosy blankets and white and fluffy pillows...It really is only a matter of time (Matlwa, 2008, p. 92).

Even though post-apartheid South Africa is not friendly to black women, Fikile's hope is not just an empty wish, but she knows that she will make her future bright by working hard. Hence, she confidently says, "I am prepared to do anything in my power to get it…Sometimes in life you have to push the boundaries, be creative, stretch your resources, and take the road less travelled to get what you want" (Matlwa, 2008, p. 94). In spite of her negative attitude towards black culture and people, Fikile is optimist that she will have positive and delightful life through determination and devotion that she is clearly aware it should be supported by personal creativity. Moreover, she argues that sleeping much is a waste of time:

> Sleep is an unnecessary luxury.... In sleep, you waste precious hours that may have been used to plan great things and make purposeful strides towards your dreams, like my Project Infinity. Only infants and senile people really need sleep. The rest are simple, weak and lazy…Perhaps today will be the day, that day, the one I will call 'the day my life turned around' …I have not a cent in the bank nor very much of an education, but a heart so heavy with ambition (Matlwa, 2008, p. 87).

Here, Fikile clearly understands the value of effective use of time in order to meet an intended objective in life. She strongly criticizes laziness and argues that laziness coerces people to waste their time in sleep. Although she knows that she has no money at hand and she has not gone far in education, she believes that her courage and commitment will lead her to achieve better life in future. Fikile's strong spirit and self-pride regardless of her existing harsh conditions agrees with many African feminists' contention that African women are capable to escape every challenges that they encounter throughout their lives. Indeed, Fikile is confident enough in herself when she says, "I knew I was brilliant at anything I set my mind on doing" (Matlwa, 2008, p. 94). Therefore, Fikile never submits herself to any obstacle that pushes back her from achieving her goal despite the fact that she shows disrespect towards African people and culture as well as she hates her own blackness.

In sum, in *Coconut*, although Matlwa (2008) raises some prominent issues of African feminism, such as poverty, men to women cooperation and motherhood. Through characterization of Tshepo, Matlwa underlines African feminist notion of building cooperative relationship between men and women. Tshepo makes great contribution helping Ofilwe to get out of the identity crisis. Again, Gemina displays many qualities of African motherhood as she nurtures her children in African ways and protects them from patriarchal suppressions. The novel also critically evaluates how post-apartheid Black South African women and ordinary people suffer from poverty implying that the so-called independence cannot bring change to the lives of the Black people of the nation. Matlwa also shows that in post-colonial South Africa, white cultural domination continuous. The author interrogates the meaning of independence since post-colonial women suffer from identity crisis and racial discrimination on their own land. Hence, Matlwa calls for the urgency of decolonizing the mind of the colonized people in general and women in particular.

6.2 Synopsis of *The Hairdresser of Harare* (2010)

The Hairdresser of Harare is narrated in the first person point of view by a female character, Vimbai who desperately evaluates the harsh conditions of post-independent Zimbabwe. Vimbai lives in a house that she inherits from her late brother, Robert with her little daughter, Chiwoniso whom she bears from a wrong sexual relation with a wealthy black man, Phillip. Because of this house, her family abandons her. Her brothers, including her parents, claim that she has no right to inherit Robert's house although Robert legally confirms in his will that Vimbai is his heiress. Yet, she takes the case to court and wins her brothers.

Vimbai works as a hairdresser in Mrs. Khumalo Hair and Beauty Treatment Salon in Harare where Minster M_, who is ZANU-PF politician, is all time client. Vimbai has been appreciated for making every customer feel like a white woman until Dumisani, a male hairdresser, whose ability amazes more the owner and customers, joins the salon. Mrs. Khumalo appoints Dumisani as the manager of the salon that makes Vimbai's anxiety worsen. Seeing Vimbai's disappointment, Dumisani tries to ease her so that their friendship becomes strong and Vimbai offers him a room at a modest price. Dumisani introduces Vimbai to his wealthy parents as his girlfriend, and thus his parents are very happy for his heterosexual relation since they have been worrying for his homosexual relation with a Canadian man, Colin whom Dumisani's father manages to deport. Indeed, his parents help Vimbai to open her own Beauty Salon. While Vimbai is busy enjoying with her own salon, Dumisani still works for Mrs. Khumalo until he is found guilt of a homosexual crime that forces him to leave his country.

Finally, Vimbai finds Dumisani's diary and learns that he is homosexual. She also confirms that Dumisani has gay relations with the Minister's husband, Mr. M. Hence, she immediately reports the matter to the Minister so that she directs her political hooligans to remove Dumisani. However, Vimbai feels sympathy for Dumisani because she loves him despite his state so that she begs the Minister to let him leave the country without being harmed. In this way, he goes to Britain and maintains his homosexual practice there without fear.

6.2.1 Women and Post-independence Problems

Post-independence African governments have failed to fulfill the demands and hopes of African people. Because of this failure, many African people, particularly women remain poor and lead miserable lives (Abiye, 1998; Melakneh, 2008; Mikell, 1997). The failure of development in Africa compels African feminists to consider the poverty issue in their struggle against women's oppression (Nnaemeka, 2003; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994; Ogunyemi, 1985). Post-colonial poverty is one of the issues that *The Hairdresser of Harare* exposes. Post-colonial Zimbabwe's agony puts women and girls with poor family backgrounds in difficulties while they struggle for survival. For instance, the protagonist of the novel, Vimbai is one of the poor girls, and because of this, Phillip, one of the prominent black tycoons in the nation deceives her:

> I was very young when I had Chiwoniso. Her father was a very well-known businessman. Nineteen and unemployed, I was still living with my parents.… He said, 'Girl, you're so beautiful. Get in. Let's go for a ride. ''Leave me alone,' I said…I may have been innocent but I wasn't stupid; I'd heard about Sugar Daddies! A few days later, a neighbor's child came over and asked for me. He gave me a cellphone and said it was for me. I asked who it was from and he said a man had given it to him. 'Don't be a fool. Take it,' my sister said…For the first time in my life, I had my own phone. But it was not long before I knew who'd given it to me. It's Phillip…and then he asked me out for lunch.... We arranged to meet on the corner beyond the shops (Huchu, 2010, p. 20).

From the above excerpt, we can understand that poverty compels Vimbai to relate with this rich man. He deceives her using her weak side; that is, as her parents are too poor to fulfill her material needs, she is forced to accept Phillip's gift although she clearly understands the consequence. Besides, he cunningly cuckolds her when "he said he loved me; he said he would leave his wife for me" (Huchu, 2010, p. 41). However, when she tells him that she is pregnant, he shouts, "You weren't even a virgin when I first fucked you. How do I know it's mine?' He knew very well why I wasn't a virgin and to use this in such a callous way really cut me" (Huchu, 2010, p. 41). This clearly indicates that Phillip wants her just to satisfy his sexual desire considering her a sex object.

Nonetheless, after sometime, he seems to accept the baby that Vimbai says, "One day he sent a driver to my home with some money and nappies. He even called later that day to find out how the baby was" (Huchu, 2010, p. 41). Phillip's intention of sending money to Vimbai is not to discharge his fatherly responsibility for Chiwoniso; rather he seeks to reuse her body. To maintain this point, he comes to her home and claims to restore the relationship because of the money he has been sending, but she refuses him.

> He pinned me to the door and tried to kiss me. I said no...'I don't care, you bitch. I pay you my money every month so that you can live in a nice house and wear fine clothes. You are my bitch and I can have you any time I want.' He tried again, but he was so drunk I overpowered him and pushed him out of the house…The payments stopped soon after that. There were people who told me to take him to court and get a maintenance order, but I was too proud (Huchu, 2010, pp. 41-42).

Phillip has been sending money to Vimbai with the intent to maintain his sexual relation with her. His arrogant speech reveals that he assumes her as a simple object that can be bought by money. If he had truly wanted to support his daughter, he would have not stopped sending money. Vimbai's refusal of him also implies that she does not want to be deceived again. She runs with the shortage of money to bring up her daughter, yet she even declines to take him to court in order not to let her daughter be seen by the father who has no affection to his child. This shows that one of the most crucial problems that the novel reveals is poverty motivated sexual abuse by men, particularly rich men becomes the pertinent obstacle for young girls. Sexual abuse is a common problem that many girls in post-independence Zimbabwe also suffer from such problem. Most awfully, religious men force girls to sleep with them:

> It's Pastor Chasi's child…He has a wife and two kids. He's refusing to accept the baby. It made for a juicy piece of gossip but there was nothing new about the story of a pastor getting one of his flock pregnant. He could easily turn around and say that the Holy Spirit made him do it, but chances were that Patricia would be given some money and told to keep quiet (Huchu, 2010, p. 20).

It is very disgusting that religious leaders commit sexual abuse on their followers. They misuse their power even convincing girls that they have sex with them because the spirit orders them to

do so. Such pastors use girls as sex objects. The most disappointing thing is that the victims remain silent instead of confronting the men. Such girls might be threaten by the pastors; or simply think that they should keep silence for the pastors are ordered by the fake spirit; or because of their poverty, the girls may be deceived by money that the pastors give them not to expose the case. Moreover, the above excerpt also supports African feminists' claim that Christianity has been serving as an effective tool to strengthen African women's suppression and exploitation. All the more, the novel demonstrates that little girls are vulnerable to rape:

> I insist on bathing her myself every evening...she could not possibly know that I was checking for any signs of abuse. I knew I was being paranoid but the Herald was always full of stories about abused children... the Child Abuse Clinic at Harare Hospital was seeing a hundred kids a week and that was just the tip of the iceberg. The only way that was going to happen to Chiwoniso was over my dead body (Huchu, 2010, p. 11).

Vimbai's worry about her child Chiwoniso is due to the prevalence of sexual abuse on little girls in post-colonial Harare. Abusers deceive not only orphan children but also children who have parents. Although Vimbai complains about the hitches of single motherhood, she gives priority to her daughter's safety. As the problem is very serious, Vimbai is forced to check her daughter's body every day besides working for income.

Moreover, Huchu reveals that due to economic problems rural girls migrate to cities and lead very harsh lives as housemaids. In this line, Ampofo et al. (2008) prove that many girls/women in post-colonial Africa always migrate from rural parts to towns and cities because of deep-rooted poverty so that they have hope for a better life as they leave home. Ironically, their employers abuse such girls for the girls do not have exposure to city life. For example, Vimabi's servant, Maidei, receives inhuman treatment as the narration goes, "The stupid girl just stood there looking at me until I dismissed her...I knew I had to replace her, but not with someone too clever" (Huchu, 2010, p. 10). Although Vimbai seems to be feminist, she has a negative attitude towards rural girls considering them as passive and unaware of their rights. Thus, she considers Maidei an object that cannot have knowledge to get a better job. However, Vimbai knows that Maidei is a hardworking girl although she does not reflect this when she badly treats her. "The one thing I admired about her was her ability to do work quietly and uncomplainingly" (Huchu, 2010, p. 11). Similarly, the

servant of Dumisani's family has moved from a rural area to Harare searching a better life. Vimbai observes how the maid handles all the work loads of the family beginning from the morning.

> A maid was already cleaning. She must have started at six in the morning or thereabouts. 'Mangwanani.' She greeted me with a heart-warming smile and asked if I would like some coffee... Her voice sounded rural.... The country girls made better maids, because as they had no family and friends in the city, they would be tied to the house with a lower risk that they could get pregnant (Huchu, 2010, p. 115).

Rural girls who migrate to towns and cities as a means of escaping poverty lead disgraceful lives serving large families without rest. Since the servant is fully dependent on her employer, she has been obliged to work day and night without rest. This is because she has no family or friends in the city to share her problems. Accordingly, from rural to urban migration of girls due to poverty is one of the contemporary problems that women face in Africa. Such women are seen as slaves for their employers consider them as too naïve to claim their rights. Huchu in this regard seems to convey that unless rural girls' economic problems are solved, it is difficult to attain women's freedom in post-colonial African situations. These two servants are obliged to leave their parents for they do not have access to education that can brighten their future. Unless the girls get education, it is possible to predict that they will remain in such miserable lives. Vimbai witnesses the importance of education in shaping people's personality as she says, "It's a combination of having the right type of education and an upbringing that taught you how to navigate society's mores" (Huchu, 2010, p. 75). In Vimbai's view, women should get proper education to alleviate their problem and the education should enable them to understand their societies' socio-cultural values. What is more, orphan children are compelled to stop school and lead life by begging. In the following extract, Vimbai describes how post-independence Zimbabwe is unfriendly to poor and orphan children.

> A boy came in later that morning; he was not much older than my daughter...We all bought the frozen popsicles more out of sympathy than because of the heat...There were many more like him roaming about the city. I shuddered when I imagined my own child having to leave school and fend for herself…He thanked us and went on his way. I could see Mrs Khumalo watching him until he was out of sight. Her face showed a mother's concern and helplessness all rolled into one (Huchu, 2010, p. 15).

Vimbai scornfully states her disillusionment about post-colonial Zimbabwe's failure when the child comes to Mrs. Khumalo's salon to beg. Similar to many post-colonial African nations, Zimbabwe's independence has not brought a promising environment for lower class Zimbabweans, particularly for women and children (Kambarami, 2006). As Vimbai's observation shows, the government that came to power through the struggle of the people does not seem to care for its people. As a result, poor children have no bright future since they do not go to school and do not get parental care. In addition, the excerpt reveals that African mothers' love and pity is not limited to their own children. They are generous and helpful to every child they encounter. Mrs. Khumalo and all girls in the salon show their concern and sympathy to the child despite their own personal problems. Huchu (2010) further criticizes the corrupt and disappointing conditions of post-colonial Zimbabwe. The younger generations of Zimbabwe lose hope on their country, and thus they are forced to migrate in search of better life:

> All the people waiting in line seemed to be young. Their desperation to leave the country showed on their faces.... It was ironic that during the war of independence people had not left in the manner they were doing now, under the same revolutionary government that had previously freed them. Could it really be that independence had become a greater burden than the yoke of colonial oppression? Street kids stood in the queue as well. They were an enterprising lot, selling their places towards the front and then promptly rejoining the queue (Huchu, 2010, p. 119).

Vimbai makes the above observation when she goes to the country's emigration office with Michelle to process her passport. This extract remarks that post-independence Zimbabwe is hostile to not only ordinary girls and women but also for many other young people of the nation. Vimbai's surveillance of young people of the nation desperately going abroad for better life as well as orphan street children's dreadful struggle to endure life makes her to conclude that the colonial oppression is better than the problems brought up by the post-colonial government led by indigenous elites who fought for freedom. "I recalled a time when the city council forced truant kids into school or rounded up street kids and put them in orphanages. Nowadays nobody bothered" (Huchu, 2010, p. 15). Hence, dreadfully, the post-colonial government fails to discharge the responsibility that had been carried out by the colonial government.

A security problem also disturbs women's lives in post-colonial Zimbabwe. "The thieves in Harare worked 24/7 and a house full of women made for easy pickings" (Huchu, 2010, p. 12). Vimbai complains that post-independence Harare has been indiscreet for women so that they fear to lead independent lives. This grumbling seems to be extended to the government because the thieves are intrepid so that they can rob in day light. As a result, Vimbai, as a single mother leads an anxious life for she thinks that the fate of her neighbor may meet her one day. Vimbai also comments when a man harasses her in a day light while she battles to get transport in Harare that:

> A man in an oversized cheap suit asked me. He looked like a civil servant…'You look like someone I've met before.' I ignored him; being chatted up at the bus stop was nothing new. He persisted…'You think you're special, but you're not even beautiful'... Getting abused was nothing new either…A kombi came by and I jumped in, glad to escape (Huchu, 2010, p. 25).

The man seduces her even without introducing himself. It is possible to imagine what would have happened if she had failed to get into the car. This shows that women from lower economic backgrounds remain being subjected to sexual abuse even though women's issue has been one of the crosscutting subjects in many post-independence African governments. More prominently, Vimbai's remark on day-to-day life of the ordinary dwellers' of Harare whom she meets struggling to get transport maintains the severity of the problem. "I was sandwiched between other bodies and could hardly breathe. The seat designed for three was filled with four people...Crowding to maximize profits. The smell of sweat and bad breath was overpowering" (Huchu, 2010, p. 25). Thus, post-colonial Zimbabwe is a lawless country so that transport workers exploit the poor to get more money.

Even Vimbai misses the dead colonial era comparing it with contemporary situations of the country. "I can vaguely recall a time when we had buses that ran to a timetable in Harare" (Huchu, 2010, p. 25). Thus, the novel has represented post-colonial Zimbabwe, which has been governed by the indigenous elite as much worse than the context where it was led by the colonial power. That is, the colonial government was much better to black people than its black successors who came to power through the armed struggle of the masses. Vimbai paradoxically states the overall conditions of post-colonial Zimbabwe as, "I felt an atmosphere of friendliness, violence,

innovation, poverty and joy but the one thing that hung over everything else was despair; an air of hopelessness" (Huchu, 2010, p. 27). Through the eyes of the female protagonist, the author exposes the destructive conditions of post-independence Zimbabwe and calls for social transformation realizing that women cannot get proper freedom if the nation is not transformed into a place where poverty is eradicated and peace, security, and justice are protected and kept long lasting by both government and societies.

6.2.2 Women and Social Change

One of the basic issues in African feminism is dismantling patriarchy. African feminists struggle against patriarchal subjugation of women that limits their role to household chores (Kolawole, 2004; Nnaemeka, 2005). In this regard, *The Hairdresser of Harare* deconstructs patriarchal ideology by creating progressive and competent women characters. For instance, Minister M_, who is from an ordinary background, achieves one of the highest political positions in the nation:

> Minister M_ came in to get her hair done once a month. She had grown up in rural Chivhu.... Minister M_ had joined the liberation struggle when she was only fourteen. She had fought bravely against the Rhodesian Army. After independence, she entered politics and continued with her schooling...she became a deputy minister and later a full minister (Huchu, 2010, p. 15).

Huchu's depiction of this woman is against the patriarchal projection that dictates women as both physically and mentally weak. The Minister is grown up in a rural area where the patriarchal ideology has been employed without challenge. In most rural parts of Africa, girls have been compelled to get married in their early ages than going to school (Cherop, 2015; Kambarami, 2006). Nonetheless, Minister M_ has successfully passed through obstacles, and she is able to acquire political position. What is important to notice here is that, Minister M_'s achievement is not offered to her as a way of empowering women, but she has achieved it through hard work and determination. This affirms that African women are fit without affirmative action that has been inherited from the Western world and implemented in many post-colonial African nations. It maintains African feminists' argument that Western feminist philosophy is not applicable in African context, and hence African leaders should use indigenous philosophical views in order to eliminate oppressive practices and thoughts fully (Nnaemeka, 2003; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994).

Besides all this, Huchu subverts the misrepresentation of African women in earlier anti-colonial and post-colonial African novels in which women characters take marginalized positions.

In like manner, another woman character, Mrs. Khumalo is portrayed in the novel as an entrepreneur who is dedicated and skillful in running business. Many African feminists agree that in traditional African culture, women handle agricultural activities in addition to discharging routine household activities. Thus, despite the Western feminists' stereotypical projection of African women as fully submissive to patriarchy, many African rural women are not totally dependent on their husbands with regard to economy for they support their husbands in fulfilling family needs (Ezeigbo, 2007; Oyewumi, 2003; Shodhganga, 2013).

Mrs. Khumalo is a skilled businesswoman and knows "a jack of all trades: Mrs. Khumalo was a hairdresser, farmer, trader, IT consultant, you name it, she did it" (Huchu, 2010, p. 14). Mrs. Khumalo possesses multiple business personalities, and such portrayal of the woman falsifies the patriarchal ideology that stereotypically weakens women's potential regardless of their personal and intellectual quality and ability. Besides, Mrs. Khumalo recognizes professional workers as the main forces who bring success to her business when she argues, "Agnes is my daughter but that is not a qualification in itself" (Huchu, 2010, p. 75). Thus, instead of her own lazy daughter, she trusts the hardworking employee, Vimbai, to manage the beauty salon in her absence:

> Agnes sat in a corner reading a magazine.… This girl was so lazy, you had to spell everything out. It was left to me to tell Mrs Khumalo about the calls we'd been getting for the vacancy. This was something else I admired about her. Had it been another person, they would have looked for a relative to fill the position, but not Mrs Khumalo. She wanted the best people working for her (Huchu, 2010, pp. 4-5).

Mrs. Khmalo is a dynamic and progressive entrepreneur who takes every action that helps her to maximize profit. She acquires sufficient knowledge in business so that she gives credit to the diligent employee rather than her own daughter. Again, Mrs. Khumalo values skill and profession rather than kinship and closeness while recruiting employees. The profession of hairdressing is traditionally given to women that Vimbai describes, "I'd never thought that men might try to get a woman's job. A male hairdresser, who'd ever heard of such a thing?" (Huchu, 2010, pp. 7). However, Mrs. Khumalo accepts Dumisani, when he tells her that he is a professional hairdresser.

Initially, Mrs. Khumalo seems to reflect patriarchal ideology when she asks Dumisani, "So you want something for your sister or cousin maybe…Young man, d'you think I am looking for a garden-boy? I want a hairdresser" (Huchu, 2010, pp. 6-7). Here, it is possible to know that Mrs. Khumalo considers hairdressing as a womanly task. Nonetheless, she has easily changed her mind when Dumisani shows his profession practically:

> But instead of leaving, the young man stepped into the shop towards Matilda who was counting out her money…The man said, 'Your hair was set beautifully, but the style she's given you is not for you. You have a round face, so instead of these curls we need to layer it so that it flows with the smooth contours of your face.' He worked briskly with his comb, then took a pair of scissors to trim the ends. Our boss was silent as she watched him with a quiet fascination…The stranger worked quickly like an artist working on a living sculpture…. He put his hands on Matilda's shoulders and made her look in the mirror.... 'What do you think?' he asked. 'Sweet Jesus, I look like Naomi Campbell.' Matilda's body was trembling with excitement…That is when Mrs Khumalo stepped in. She'd seen enough... The young man said that his name was Dumisani. Mrs Khumalo took his details and told him that he was to start work the following Monday (Huchu, 2010, pp. 7-8).

Mrs. Khumalo has transformed her attitude and employs Dumisani when she understands how creative and effective he is. As well, Dumisani's engagement in tasks that are given to women only shows that the traditional gender role is being transformed. Dumisani's effectiveness in women's hairdressing that has been considered women's work indicates that the conservative patriarchal culture begins to be renovated. Men's involvement in works assigned to women only and vice-versa can be taken as a sign of deconstructing patriarchal gender roles. Such deconstruction is maintained in the novel when women themselves accept and recognize that a man can effectively do womanly role even better than a woman does. This is the reason that many women customers of the Salon prefer Dumisani rather than Vimbai whom they had been admiring before his engagement in the salon. Briefly, Dumisani's proficiency and perfection in dressing women's hair suggests that the traditional gender role begins to be changed.

More importantly, Huchu's representation of two successful women characters: The Minister and Mrs. Khumalo has subverted both patriarchal and Western feminist notions of wifehood. Patriarchy defines wifehood in relation to domestic or indoor activities while Western feminists conceive it as one of the obstacles to women's freedom and empowerment. Both female characters of *The Hairdresser of Harare* are married to men and being a wife does not affect their respective success. In contrast to patriarchal delineation, these women characters are prominently seen taking part in public spaces while discharging wifehood responsibility. On the other hand, unlike Western feminist views, their state of wifehood does not prohibit them from their engagement in politics and business respectively. This agrees with African feminist postulation that African women are capable of handling both domestic and public roles at a time so that wifehood should not be rejected as far as it does not suppress women (Nnaemeka, 2005; Ogunyemi, 1985).

In many traditional cultures of Africa, a girl who bears a child without marriage is nagged and never be accepted by family of a young man who proposes to marry her. To the contrary, when Vimbai fearfully introduces her little daughter Chiwoniso to Michelle, she becomes very happy and says, '"Come to Auntie Michelle.' Picking her up, Michelle brought Chiwoniso over to the sofa next to me. They were smiling at each other and holding hands" (Huchu, 2010, p. 97). Surprisingly, Dumisani's parents also accept Chiwoniso as their granddaughter that we learn from Dumisani's response to Vimbai's worry to go to his parents' dinner party leaving Chiwoniso alone. "You mean they know about her?'…'I already told them and they're delighted at the prospect of having a little one run around the house'" (Huchu, 2010, p. 111). This can also be taken as an evidence that African patriarchal ideology is being trembling in post-colonial Zimbabwe's context. What is more, men's attitude towards women's right has been in a change when Robert, Vimba's deceased brother leaves a will that states Vimbai is his heiress if he dies:

> He'd left a will and a lawyer arranged by the British Embassy came round and read it to us. 'I give my entire interest in the property, which I have purchased in full, together with any insurance on such real property, but subject to any encumbrances on the said real property, to my sister Vimbai Hozo and my niece Chiwoniso (Huchu, 2010, p. 32).

In most African patriarchal cultures, a woman is not allowed to inherit brother's property if a man dies; it is the deceased one's brother who inherits all his possessions including his wife (Cherop, 2015; Ezeaku, 2014; Kambarami, 2006; Ohaeto, 2015; Segueda, 2015). However, Huchu's novel reveals that both men and women have been questioning such women suppressive tradition. For example, Vimbai's brother, Robert who has died in London dismisses the patriarchal tradition that bans women's inheritance right by offering his will to Vimbai rather than to his brothers Takesure and Knowledge. Nonetheless, her brothers have challenged the implementation of the will because they claim that they are traditionally granted the right to inherit the house.

> I had overheard, our two eldest brothers, discussing it in the weeks before. Takesure, being the oldest, would take the main house and Knowledge and his wife could live in the cottage…Takesure leapt up and grabbed the will from the lawyer's hands. 'What's the meaning of this?' He tore it in half and threw it on the floor…Takesure and Knowledge threatened to beat me up if I didn't sign the house over to them. It was as though they felt entitled to it by rights. Baba and Mother agreed that the house should go to them…Takesure and Knowledge moved their families forcibly into the house. It was only after months of going to and fro to the courts that they were evicted by the police. I endured endless threats, which only stopped when I won a peace order barring my family from being a hundred meters near me or my house (Huchu, 2010, pp. 31-32).

The citation clearly indicates that Vimbai's brothers exhibit their manly power as they threaten her not to claim her legal right because in this tradition, women are not allowed to inherit family property since their husbands' brothers regard the wives as inheritable objects (Ohaeto, 2015). However, Vimbai is well aware that she should fight against patriarchal oppression. Vimbai wins her brothers taking the case to the court so that she deconstructs the patriarchal tradition that ban women from inheritance right, and indeed this portrays her commitment towards struggling against oppression since she confidently challenges her own family members. In other words, unlike most African women who submit their rights to their families, Vimbai prefers her freedom instead of staying in company with her patriarchal family. Because she fights to gain her inheritance, the family totally rejects her so that she is forced to lead life with her little daughter.

As well, Vimbai dismantles the tradition that forces children to ask for apology even if the family is wrong. When her brother Fungai says, “I get the feeling that they know they’re wrong, but they can’t say it. In our culture, a parent does not apologize to their child... But there is something you could do to smooth things over” (Huchu, 2010, p. 54), nevertheless, Vimbai refuses it for she wants to change such convention when she responds, “Like hell I will. I am not the one in the wrong here” (Huchu, 2010, p. 54). As a result, she argues that ones who must plea for apology are her parents for their wrongdoings so that she crumbles the tradition that demands children to be defeated to their parents even though the children logically win over the parents. Here, Huchu’s *The Hairdresser of Harare* maintains the need for women’s liberation by creating strong, central female characters like Vimbai who break women’s culture of silence in African cultures similar to African outspoken feminists writers like the Nigerian Zulu Sofola and the Ghanaian Ama Ata Aidoo (Begum, 2016; Coetzee, 2017).

6.2.3 Women as Kinship Connectors

African feminism recognizes the communal aspect of African societies such as the significance of tribal alliances, kinship, and comprehensive families. Kinship solidarity is one of the indigenous traditions that most African feminists embrace (Phillips, 2006; Nnaemeka, 2005). In *The Hairdresser of Harare*, many women characters seem to be comfortable with preserving kinship solidarity. To begin with, the Minister strives to connect herself to other women and their spouses:

> A lot of people assumed Mrs. Khumalo was Ndebele, but actually she was Shona, it was her husband who had the Ndebele roots. The Minister even called her *Vatete* (auntie) because by some conjuring trick they had managed to establish a relationship based on their totems (Huchu, 2010, p. 16).

The Minister wants to sustain a relationship with Mrs. Khumalo who does not belong to her tribe because Mrs. Khumalo’s husband is from the Minister’s tribe. The Minister again confirms her interest in kinship connection when she makes acquaintance with one of the salon’s customers. She says, “Patience, you’re my little sister because I have a cousin who is married into your people” (Huchu, 2010, p. 17). The Minister who occupies one of the highest political positions in the country makes every effort to be connected to ordinary relatives in every opportunity she gets

to meet people. As indicated above, she escapes the patriarchal subjugation through struggle and determination, but she honors important indigenous traditions like kinship solidarity.

The Minister's solidarity is not restricted to those she calls relatives, but she is also seen while helping all hairdressers in Mrs. Khumalo's salon. The Minister's politeness and concern for all people she encounters regardless of her political position in the nation has surprised Vimbai because she does not expect it since there is always a big social gap between very prominent individuals like the Minister and the ordinary people. The Minister is very keen when she greets and shows concern to other people. The following excerpt maintains the Minister's kindness and concern for establishing social harmony among people of her nation or society.

> 'How's Chiwoniso, that's her name isn't it? I wish I'd brought something for her.' 'She's fine you got her name right.' It amazed me the way she remembered our names although we were nobodies. 'How's your mother feeling these days?' she asked Memory. 'Much better, but her bones cause her problems when it's raining.' The Minister nodded sympathetically. 'Is she getting the medicine she needs?' 'Yes, but it's expensive. Things are very difficult these days.' 'Go to the pharmacy on Angwa Street. Tell them I sent you and they will give you whatever you need for her. Make sure you take'. Memory clapped her hands and thanked The Minister. The Minister pretended not to notice and turned to Yolanda. 'Are you still going to night school?' 'I'm getting ready for my final exams.' 'You're a good girl. You'll pass. The country needs educated young people like you. You are the future'…There was a down-to-earth quality about her; she felt like one of the girls, even though we all knew she was loaded (Huchu, 2010, pp. 16-17).

The Minister maintains African tradition of social responsibility when she tries to share the problems of the above-mentioned women. As a result, the Minister is the actual reflection of contemporary African woman whom African feminists endeavor to create. Furthermore, another female character, Michelle, often visits and treats Vimbai as her sister in-law although Dumisani and Vimbai are not married. She says to Vimbai, "The important thing is that we are together now as a family…. You're going to be my best friend in the whole wide world" (Huchu, 2010, p. 98). Michelle's concern signals that since Vimbai is the girlfriend of her brother, she is her relative so

that she knows she has responsibility to help the relative, and hence she wants to strengthen their relationships. Michelle is a young girl and has exposure to see the Western world for she has lived in the United States of America where individualism is preferred to communal life, but she strives to respect her ancestral tradition of kinship connections.

6.2.4 Women and Racial Identity

Identity is one of the foremost issues in post-colonial African feminism and literature. African feminists such as (Nnaemeka, 2003; Ogunyemi, 1985; Oyewumi, 2003) among others claim that African feminism should respect and maintain indigenous cultural identity (black identity) and should base its struggle against oppression on indigenous strategies and philosophical views of African women. However, *The Hairdresser of Harare* discloses that most clients of Mrs. Khumalo's Salon want to be "a white woman" because they consider whiteness as a standard of beauty. Thus, they prefer Vimbai to dress their hair for she makes them feel like the white woman as she ironically comments, "There's only one secret to being a successful hairdresser and I've never withheld it from anyone. 'Your client should leave the salon feeling like a white woman.' Not Colored, not Indian, not Chinese...whiteness is a state of mind (Huchu, 2010, p. 3). Black women in post-independence Harare have internalized the colonial legacy for they think that blackness is ugliness; whereas whiteness is prettiness.

The source of identity crisis is always the residual effect of colonialism so that the colonized loses his /her autonomous identity under the influence of mimicry (Fanon, 1968). On the other hand, Vimbai argues that the perception of whiteness as prettiness is psychological effect that has been imposed by colonizers, but she uses the opportunity for more profit making. Maintaining this point, Vimbai comments that many of her clients request her to give them new style by bringing "a folded picture torn from some glossy American magazine…I always indulged them with a white lie" (Huchu, 2010, p. 3). Here, Vimbai discerns that whatever style she follows, a black woman cannot be a white woman. These black women are blind to this reality since they have internalized the colonial/neo-colonial ideology. In addition to Vimbai's customers, other black girls whom she observes waiting for transport are in the identity crisis:

> The kombi stopped and picked up two girls wearing extra-large sunglasses who spoke in English with a nasal accent. Back in the day they would have been called mannose brigade; anything that stripped you of your Africanness whether it was the sound of your voice or the nature of your hair was something to be admired (Huchu, 2010, p. 81).

Women and girls of Harare still prefer Western styles and pronunciation. This shows that the colonized people never drop the colonial memory unless they drop the oppressive colonial language (Ngugi, 1986). Nonetheless, Vimbai seems to be in an ambivalent position when she admires her daughter's fluency in English. "It made very little sense but I marveled at her fluent English. It rolled from her little tongue sounding natural, not forced like mine" (Huchu, 2010, p. 12). Vimbai's approbation of fluency in English is confirmed when she criticizes the accent of a lawyer who brings the will of her deceased brother, Robert. She says, "I was not too impressed by his English. He had a thick Shona accent with r's where his l's should have been" (Huchu, 2010, p. 31). Vimbai has sarcastically blamed black women who reject their identity and instead follow white women's styles and culture. On the other hand, she herself is found admiring fluency in English. Hence, she is in between maintaining the colonial ideology and decolonizing African identity. In this connection, Fanon (1968) stresses that the colonized subject has two dimensions which are the self-world and the world of the colonizer whereby the colonizers' world and cultures are standard, superior and universal norms.

Conversely, the young female character, Michelle prefers Zimbabwe than United States of America when she comparatively describes to Vimbai, "It's alright but it's nothing like home. The people there don't wash" (Huchu, 2010, p. 97). Michelle along with embracing her people's tradition deconstructs the long held view of Westerners as modern and neat in contrast with the primitive African ones (Okome, 2003). Likewise, the Minister practically demonstrates her African identity when she has been continually "wearing a green African dress with a matching head wrap, both of which had pictures of Robert Mugabe" (Huchu, 2010, p. 57). Unlike many post-colonial African elites who prefer Western way of life and dressing style, the Minister expresses her African identity using indigenous costume as well she expresses her traditional values proudly. Equally, Mrs. Khumalo is always seen "wearing a green Nigerian bou bou, which hugged the contours of her amply fed body" (Huchu, 2010, pp. 4-5). The author of the novel,

through these two higher-class black women characters conveys the necessity to restore African cultural identity, which had been lost due to colonialism and neocolonialism. Thus, Huchu in *The Hairdresser of Harare*, while disclosing the prevalence of identity problem in post-colonial Zimbabwe, calls for the need to decolonize identities of the Black Zimbabwean women.

6.2.5 Women and Homosexuality

Most African countries legally banned homosexuality, and Zimbabwe is one of them (Betelhem, 2010). In *The Hairdresser of Harare*, the theme of homosexuality is also vividly expressed. For instance, Dumisani, one of the main characters of the novel, is abandoned by his family for being gay. Vimbai has come to know this issue when she reads Dumisani's diary, which narrates that Dumisani "spent the weekend at home with Colin...No man has ever made me feel so good about myself" (Huchu, 2010, p. 158). When Dumisani's father learns his sexual relation to this Canadian man, he facilitates Colin's deportation:

> Maybe Kasuvandu saw us together in the bar late one night, our arms round each other… But that my break from my family should come this way… and on top of Colin's peremptory departure I think he knew my family was behind it…Will he ever trust me again (Huchu, 2010, p. 159).

In this text, Colin's forced departure before his visa expiration date suggests that Dumisani's family, particularly his father has been secretly following Dumisani's everyday movement with Colin. For homosexuality is disgraceful and immoral in African cultural context, Dumisani's father decides to take immediate action in order to save his son from such humiliating relationship. As same-sex practice is persistently believed to be un-African and a Western import so that prominent African leaders like Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe, denounced homosexuality in ways that promote violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people (Mtenje, 2016). Even though Dumisani's father has facilitated Colin's deportation, it did not solve the problem because Dumisani is disappointed when he finds out his father's involvement in deportation process, and thus he decides to leave his parents' home. In order to conceal his gayness, he introduces Vimbai as his girlfriend to his parents by pretending that he has started a heterosexual affair without informing her:

> ‘Dad, I want you to meet my girlfriend, Vimbai’. He had called me his girlfriend. How was I to respond? ‘Your girlfriend?’ repeated his mother... Then she burst into tears...‘Come here, my child,’ she said, and embraced me. The whole family gathered around me like I was some sort of zoological curiosity. They prodded and felt me, as if to check if I really was flesh and blood (Huchu, 2010, pp. 91-92).

Dumisani’s family members have been worried by his condition, and this illustrates that in Zimbabwe, homosexuality is seen as a curse and illness. In many African traditions, homosexuality is considered as taboo and it is the implication of insanity and desecration. This is why all members of Dumisani’s family warmly accept Vimbai as soon as they hear that she is his girlfriend. This spontaneous approval signals that whatever Vimbai’s background and personality could be Dumisani’s parents are eager to maintain the relationship because they know that there is no worse thing than being homosexual. Thus, they recognize Vimbai positively for she cures their son. Indeed, they strive to sustain this relation by offering her extraordinary care and treatment, and they realize her dream of opening her own beauty salon. Dumisani’s father congratulates her saying, “We’ve already covered your rent for the first quarter of the year, that’s your gift. Buy all the equipment and products you need and you can return the loan interest-free in two years’ time” (Huchu, 2010, p. 137). Unreserved care and support to Vimbai reinforces the importance of a woman in man’s life. Dumisani’s parents consider sustaining Dumisani’s relationship is the best medicine that fully cures their son of such disgraceful illness.

However, all these care and attentions offered to Vimbai turns to be enigmatic to her since she has no information about Dumisani’s gayness until she reads his diary. All her happiness has eroded as soon as she detects that Dumisani is homosexual. As an African woman, homosexuality is abnormal to her she could not believe what she reads so that she cries as soon as she learns the truth. She says, “If it wasn’t written in his hand and before my eyes, I would have denied it. I could not have foreseen this. He spoke like a normal man, wore clothes like a normal man and even walked like a normal man” (Huchu, 2010, p. 155). The issue appears strange to Vimbai because same-sex relationship is unaccustomed to her culture so that she has never suspected this black man, Dumisani. Thereupon, Vimbai “scrunches her nose when she picks up the diary as if it smells of something putrid” (Huchu, 2010, p. 156). Especially, she is dreadfully offended when she knows that Mr. M_ comes to her house for sexual affair with Dumisani as she states, “The day

I came home and found him and Mr. M_ was the day they had consummated their unnatural passions in the bed that I had shared with Dumi. I rubbed my body feeling dirty and needing a long bath" (Huchu, 2010, p. 157). This implies that Vimbai associates homosexuality with inhuman and immoral act. This novel confirms that homosexuality is not an African culture so that it has no place in post-colonial Zimbabwe's government as well as in black societies.

In summary, Huchu depicts female characters progressively in a way that agrees with African feminist literary theory. Some of his female characters actively participate in politics, military and business affairs even though there are female characters who are victims of post-colonial Zimbabwe's multiple problems. Characters such as Vimbai, The Minister and Mrs. Khumalo are strong women who have passed through many ups and downs and are able to achieve impressive successes to which men have been solely entitled. However, there are also some female characters who suffer from identity crisis. Huchu also shows that homosexuality has no place in Africa or Zimbabwe's culture so that its practice has been problematic even in modern city, Harare.

Chapter Seven: African feminism in Central and North African Novels

This chapter deals with analyses and interpretations of novels selected from Central and North African regions. These regions are highly influenced by Arab tradition due to the dominance of Islam (Abiye, 1998). Most literary products of these two parts of the continent come out in Arabic so that they are rare in English. Hence, in this research, only the Sudanese novel, *Minaret* represents Central African region and the Egyptian novel, *The Yacoubian Building* is chosen as the representative of North Africa. This chapter dwells on providing analyses of these two novels in their respective order using the theoretical framework of African feminism.

7.1 Plot Summary of *Minaret* (2005)

Minaret is narrated in the first person point of view by a female protagonist, Najwa. Najwa's father is the manager of the Sudanese President's Office in which he is nominated because of his marriage with Najwa's wealthy mother. Najwa's family's luxurious life has been interrupted by the coup that happened to the Sudanese government where her father has been a very prominent official. After her father is arrested, she goes to London with her mother, Mania and her only brother, Omar. In London, her mother dies and her brother is arrested for drug dealing. Najwa's former Sudanese boyfriend Anwar, who is a political refugee in London, writes her a condolence letter upon her mother's death and they restore the love affair though it later fails.

Her mother's brother, Saleh wants to take Najwa to Toronto with him, but she refuses as she prefers to be close to her imprisoned brother in London. Hence, she stops school and begins to work at her parents' friend, Uncle Nabeel's office, but later she decides to remain helping Aunty Eva, Uncle Nabeel's wife with kitchen chores. After Uncle Nabeel and his wife have left London, Najwa begins to work as a housemaid at Lamya's house. While working as a servant, Najwa strengthens her spiritual life as she usually goes to the Mosque and prays. She also attends Islamic lectures where she meets her best friend Shahinaz with her husband Sohayl.

Lamya is a half Sudanese and half Egyptian who comes to London for PhD studies. Najwa serves Lamya with her brother Tamer and her little daughter Mai. When Lamya learns Najwa's love affair with Tamer who is much younger than Najwa, she expels her from the job, but as Tamer loves Najwa so much, Lamya's mother Dr. Zeinab who lives in Cairo comes to London and tries

to convince Najwa to go back to Sudan and gives her money so that she gets rid-of her son. Najwa tells Dr. Zeinab that instead of bribing her, she should convince her son and should understand his interest so that she should not force him to study what he does not like, and she agrees. Najwa also tells Tamer that she has convinced his mother to let him free in choosing his favorite field of study so that he is allowed to learn his wish "Studies in the Qur'an, Islamic Architecture in Spain and North Africa" in a different university, but he becomes disappointed for he is forbidden to marry Najwa. Najwa decides to go to Mecca for Hajji with the money that she has received from Dr. Zeinab as a compensation for dropping the affair with Tamer.

7.1.1 Representation of Patriarchal Ideology

Depiction of the prevalence of patriarchal ideology in the contemporary Sudanese urban society is one of the recurrent themes of Aboulela's novel, *Minaret*. The Sudanese capital city, Khartoum is portrayed in the novel as the residence of patriarchal society. For instance, Najwa recalls such a scene while sitting alone in a restaurant in London. "I felt silly sitting all by myself, self-conscious. It wouldn't be done in Khartoum for a woman to be alone in a restaurant" (Aboulela, 2005, p. 113). In this citation, Najwa remains under the control of patriarchal ideology although she is not in Sudan. When we see the background of Najwa, she is from a family that has had both economic and political power in Sudan, and she is brought up in an urban way unlike her counterparts in a rural area of Sudan. She says, "They were provincial girls and I was a girl from the capital and that was the reason we were not friends" (Aboulela, 2005, p. 19). Nevertheless, she feels guilt for sitting alone in a restaurant even though she is in London where women are freer to exercise their wish than in Sudanese capital Khartoum.

Besides, in Khartoum, which is the most sophisticated city of Sudan, women are not allowed to wear what they like as Najwa says, "In Khartoum I would never wear such a short skirt in public" (Aboulela, 2005, p. 114). This shows that the city has been governed by patriarchal convention in which women are restricted to exercise their interests and right. Even more, the society of Khartoum condemns even if a girl gets pregnant by mistake. "Getting pregnant would have shocked Khartoum society, given my father a heart attack, dealt a blow to my mother's marriage, and mild, modern Omar, instead of heating me, would have called me a slut" (Aboulela, 2005, p. 149). Apart from those elders, even young men like Omar who consider themselves as civilized

cannot tolerate women's mistakes. Despite the fact that Najwa's parents are educated and politically active, they socialize her in a patriarchal way. She maintains this point saying, "Omar was allowed to smoke and drink beer and I was not...I had taken these things for granted, not questioned them" (Aboulela, 2005, p. 150). Even though Najwa and Omar were born the same day, their parents make partisanship between them on the basis of their sex. Because Omar is male, the family grants him freedom that Najwa is denied for being female. Indeed, Najwa's father refuses to pay attention to her while striving much to make Omar's future successful:

> I know he didn't think a lot about me, not because he didn't love me but because I was a girl and Mama's responsibility. He had detailed, specific plans for Omar's future, while I was going to get married to someone who would determine how the rest of my life flowed (Aboulela, 2005, p. 71).

Najwa's father is an educated man who has pa rominent role in post-colonial Sudanese politics, but his mind setup draws boundary between men and women. Patriarchal ideology compels him to show partiality between his twin children just because of their sex. He thinks that a girl is created to be a wife and her role is restricted to serve her husband. This is justified when he forbids Najwa from participating in politics as she says, "I promised my father I wouldn't get involved in student politics" (Aboulela, 2005, p. 20). Sudanese women are banned from taking part in politics for they are considered as weak to hold political positions in modern African nation states so that they are fated to be ruled by men because patriarchy regards politics as a solely men's activity and women have no capacity to hold political power (Kolawole, 2004; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994).

Due to such patriarchal socialization, Najwa only dreams to be a wife. She states, "When I was young age, I imagined I would get married, have children, the usual things.... I had friends who wanted to be doctors, diplomats but I never had these ambitions" (Aboulela, 2005, p. 167). The patriarchal socialization covers Najwa not to see things beyond wifehood. As she is grown up in the family that subordinates femaleness and praises maleness, she fails to recognize her potential and talent so that she restricts her destiny to patriarchal wifehood. Even after she joins university, Najwa still thinks that she is created to be only wife. She confirms, "I was in university to kill time until I got married and had children" (Aboulela, 2005, p. 90). This implies that the way she is

socialized has affected her worldview and dreams of life. Thus, Najwa prefers household routines rather than working in office:

> I went to her at home every day now instead of going to Uncle Nabeel at his office. I hadn't liked it at that office…I had imagined myself working in a travel agency that resembled the British Airways office in Khartoum. All day important people would visit and I would know the details of their travel arrangements. The tea boy would ask me what I wanted to drink and make me feel important. Instead, I made the tea for Uncle Nabeel and his clients…I wasn't really needed in the office…One day Aunty Eva called. Uncle Nabeel was out and so we chatted for a while. 'I'm struggling,' she said…She missed her Ethiopian maids in Khartoum. `I'll come and help you, Aunty,' I said. `I'll ask Uncle Nabeel and I'll come to you first thing in the morning.' Uncle Nabeel welcomed the idea...I arrived the next morning at their house in Pamlico laden with bags of groceries (Aboulela, 2005, pp. 125-126).

Initially, Najwa's parents are the notable upper class family in Sudan because her father has been an influential politician and her mother is from the bourgeois family who owns a large farm. Later due to political coup in Sudan, her father has been accused of corruption and killed by the new government that seized all his possessions. Again, her mother who has been in exile with her died and Omar became jailed for drug dealing in London. Even though Najwa meets the problems result from these incidents, she gets job at Uncle Nabeel's office. However, she is not happy working at office and thus she prefers to be housemaid for Uncle Nabeel's wife, Aunty Eva.

Throughout the novel, Najwa does not change her submissive mind and remains to be maid even after Aunty Eva has left London. "This is not my first job; I know how deferential a maid should be…This is my aim, to become the background to her life" (Aboulela, 2005, p. 60). Thus, Najwa has convinced herself that she is created to discharge only indoor routine tasks for she is female. Thus, Aboulela seems to reveal that patriarchal socialization pullback women from looking for better opportunities rather than confining themselves to household chores. Moreover, other educated women characters in the novel are also submissive to patriarchal ideology. Shahinaz is one of such women, and she urges that a husband should always be superior to his wife:

> When I think of a man I admire, he would have to know more than me, be older than me. Otherwise I wouldn't be able to look up to him...you can't marry a man you don't look up to. Otherwise how can you listen to him or let him guide you?' (Aboulela, 2005, p.181).

Shahinaz is a PhD student in London, but she thinks that wives should always be guided by their husbands. She reflects this patriarchal view when she advises Najwa not to marry Tamer who is much younger than she is. Shahinaz does not suggest the possibility of wife to guide husband if she is wiser than he is in life. What binds Shahinaz not to see this possibility is that she is socialized in the patriarchal way and her education cannot help her to see this reality.

Likewise, another highly educated woman, Dr. Zeinab maintains patriarchal ideology when she says, "Lamya's always been a hit stiff... I often used to wish that she was the boy and Tamer the girl" (Aboulela, 2005, p. 218). Both Tamer and Lamya are children of Dr. Zeinab (Lamya female and Tamer male). Lamya is always rebellious while Tamer "is always polite" (Aboulela, 2005, p. 88). The reverse is correct in Dr. Zeinab's view; that is a girl should always be cool and submissive; whereas, there should not be a problem if the male Tamer is rebellious as Lamya is. Beyond that, Dr. Zeinab worries about Najwa's relationship with Tamer when she says, "Out of nowhere, he wants to marry the maid!" (Aboulela, 2005, p. 221). This means that she does not believe in human equality and love so that she forces her son to stop his relation with Najwa who once has served in Lamya's house. Dr. Zeinab believes in class difference since she undermines Najwa's position as a housemaid.

Furthermore, Aboulela's novel demonstrates that educated Sudanese men subjugate women. One of the male characters, Anwar who is Najwa's boyfriend nags her as she says, "Anwar always said I was not intellectual" (Aboulela, 2005, p. 198). Even though Anwar and Najwa learn together in Khartoum University, he does not consider her as his equal because she is a female. In reality, Najwa has better class and economic background than him and he knows this when he says, "You can't compare yourself with other ordinary people" (Aboulela, 2005, p. 135). However, Anwar wants to show his superiority over her as Najwa reveals, "I would always be inferior to his" (Aboulela, 2005, p. 135). He makes her a sex slave without considering her family background and her education level. In general, *Minaret* (2005) reveals that in these contemporary times, how

patriarchal ideology oppresses Sudanese women whether they are educated or not. Such socialization seizes women back from fighting for liberation.

7.1.2 Women and Post-independence Obstacles

Post-colonial failure and its ceaseless effect on the welfare of African women has been critical issue in African feminism (Mikell, 1997; Minna, 2012; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994). African feminist novels are expected to expose and challenge post-colonial negative impacts on the lives of African women and their societies. In that way, *Minaret* (2005) reveals various forms of post-colonial impediments of Sudan and its effect on women.

Political instability is one of the dominant factors that the novel depicts as a destructive effect on post-colonial Sudanese women's life. "This military junta has brought to an end five years of democracy and free press. Two coups in four years" (Aboulela, 2005, p. 121). As many post-independence African nations do, lack of proper and democratic transition of government in Sudan not only affects the ordinary poor people but also those who had political power but failed to sustain their power due to continuous military coups. It is such coups that took the life of Najwa's father and leads her to live in exile and scornfully states, "What happened in Khartoum will always affect us.' But it was not really what happened, but who I was, whose daughter I was" (Aboulela, 2005, p. 135). This indicates that in post-colonial Sudan, since the political transition has been made by force, those people who are close to or family members of the expelled government officials are regarded as enemies of the new government.

Najwa's father has been one of the prominent Sudanese political officials who held strong relationship with the country's president, so when the military coup dismisses the president with his officials, he is also killed. Thus, his family is forced to live in exile where Najwa's mother is died and she is compelled to lead life in a foreign land as a housemaid. Although Najwa lives in London, she is always worried about circumstances in Sudan because of her family's history so that she cannot lead a stable life there. Najwa describes how she and her exiled counterparts suffer from mental trauma, which results from homesickness.

> What's wrong with us Africans?...We would watch the English, the Gulf Arabs, the Spanish, Japanese, Malaysians, Americans and wonder how it would feel to have, like them, a stable country. A place where we could make plans and it wouldn't matter who the government was they wouldn't mess up our day-to-day life...A country we could leave at any time, return to at any time and it would be there for us, solid, waiting a fractured country (Aboulela, 2005, p. 141).

The excerpt shows that political wrongdoing elsewhere in Africa is common, and it becomes the unique characteristic of the continent. Najwa envies when she observes people in London whose countries are stable. She wishes her country Sudan to be stable like others from Europe, Asia and America. Her psychological trauma emanates from the context of her nation in which she has no access to go back when she likes to do so. Such kind of depiction of post-colonial African political disorders by the female writer, Aboulela through the female character, Najwa underpins African feminist concern to involve African women in political and other transformative activities.

Along with political issues, Aboulela criticizes that post-colonial Sudanese education system is not encouraging girls/ women. The educational imbalance between men and women is confirmed in the novel when Najwa says, "In Khartoum only a minority of women drove cars and in university less than thirty per cent of students were girls -that should make me feel good about myself" (Aboulela, 2005, pp. 15-16). The female protagonist of the novel, Najwa witnesses how Sudan is far from achieving the transformation of women's education. Najwa has an educated family background, and hence she is one of the very few girls who have got access to join university.

This reveals that majority of Sudanese women remain uneducated since there has not been wider opportunity that considers women's patriarchal burden and encourages them to go school. Unless women get proper education, they cannot be economically independent and develop self-confidence that helps them to tackle any problem they come across in life (Ogunyemi, 1985; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994). Besides, Aboulela condemns that post-colonial Sudanese education does not encourage students to argue freely for lecturers do not want to entertain new ideas, logic or reason as they discourage students who deviate from what they say:

> Omar believed we had been better off under the British and it was a shame that they left. I made sure that he didn't write these ideas in any of his History or Economics essays. He would surely fail because all the books and lecturers said that colonialism was the cause of our underdevelopment (Aboulela, 2005, p. 17).

This implies that post-independence Sudanese education curriculum limits students' freedom of expression and discourages independent learning. The post-colonial Sudanese students are forced to believe only what their lecturers said and what is written in books, which they are allowed to refer to. Such traditional education system in post-independence Sudan is the continuation of colonial education system. Thus, it does not have room for new ideas and creativity so that even those who get opportunity to join university are not encouraged to take part in the country's development endeavors by doing researches and suggesting ideas that lessen the difficult transformation journey of the nation. This is why African feminism claims that African education system should not be a direct copy of the Western world, but it should be based on indigenous African philosophies and methodologies, which encourages the two-way flow of knowledge so that students can be creative and transformative. The extent of women's poverty in post-independence Sudan has also been dealt with *Minaret* (2005). Similar to many post-independence African countries, majority of Sudanese people are poor and the burden of poverty affects girls or women and children more:

> At the Gamhouriya Street traffic light a little girl knocked on my window, begging with tilted head and unfocused eyes. Because I was alone I gave her a note. If Omar had been with me, I would have given her a coin - he hated beggars. She clutched the five pounds with slow disbelief and ran back to the pavement...I could see her engulfed by other children and a few desperate adults (Aboulela, 2005, p. 16).

Najwa makes the above observation on the despondent situation of post-independence Sudanese lower class people in general and girls in particular. As the post-colonial Sudanese government fails to create politically and economically stable nation, the poor people's and girls' fate has been restricted to begging on the streets. Another point that we can learn from this extract is Najwa has sympathy for poor people while her brother, Omar is merciless. Both Omar and Najwa lead comfortable live in Sudan until their father is dismissed because of a political coup. Najwa cares

for others because she believes in social solidarity that is basic in African feminism while Omar does not want to see the compelling circumstances of the poor so that he blindly hates them.

In addition to revealing the dreadful life of the poor people, *Minaret* discloses that those who are on power enjoy better lives while the ordinary citizens are dragging behind poverty. One of the causes of post-colonial African transformation failure is the egocentricity of the black political elites who took power from their colonizers. Henceforth, while many ordinary people who fought for freedom lead dreadful lives, such leaders enjoy comfortable lives. In *Minaret*, Najwa's narration about her family's luxurious life in contrast to Anwar's poverty illustrates the point:

> He had told me that his youngest sister was blind and if they had the money, she would be able to go to Germany and get an operation. Every year we went to Europe, every summer we stayed in our flat in London or in hotels in Paris and Rome and did all our shopping. If one summer we stayed at home, Anwar could take the money we had saved and send his little sister to have an operation (Aboulela, 2005, p. 47).

The quotation is an indication of the big difference between the lives of the political elite and the ordinary Sudanese people. Najwa's family symbolizes those who have political power in the nation while Anwar's family symbolizes many Sudanese ordinary citizens who are struggling with the difficult life. In other words, post-colonial Sudanese ordinary people are under many problems, which have resulted from the greed of the political officials who are busy enjoying luxurious life instead of endeavoring to bring transformation to the nation that can contribute much in changing the miserable life of many poor dwellers of the country. Ngugi (1993) strengthens that "the result of economic, political and cultural alienation of the majority from their post-colonial rulers has been a perfect replica of colonial practices" (p. 109). The local politicians strive to sustain the colonial injustices in the post-independence era that can also be described as internal-colonization. The novel further supports this point:

> When I was young, before secondary school, I used to get into serious trouble with Mama and Baba over things like that. I gave all my Eid money to a girl in my class. I gave my gold earring to the Ethiopian maid. The maid was fired and the girl got into trouble at school with the headmistress (Aboulela, 2005, p. 47).

The above citation depicts that post-colonial elites of Sudan who grabbed the political and economic power from colonizers have no compassion to poor citizens. Najwa's parents symbolize many greedy and selfish indigenous African elites who run for their own comfort while majority of the people are suffering under poverty. In addition, the above extract maintains that Najwa's charity is not restricted to street beggars; she also shares what she has to other poor people even though her parents punish her. This indicates that Najwa is capable to capture the inconvenient situations of the country that leads the poor to beg. This upholds African feminists' endeavor to make African women active players in transformative activities of the continent because many African feminists trust in women's capacity and commitment of solving their people's problems.

7.1.3 Negotiation and Compromise

African feminists assert that African women are not aggressive by nature, and they systematically solve problems that they meet in social life (Kolawole, 2004; Nnaemeka, 2003). Even though many women characters in *Minaret* define themselves as Arab women in relation to Islamic tradition than Sudanese/ African, there are some elements of African feminist negotiation and compromise in the novel. For example, Dr. Zeinab suggests the importance of negotiation and compromise to maintain stable marriage when she carps her daughter's aberrant behavior:

> I don't know what she's going to do with these problems she's having with her husband. I tell her she has to be diplomatic, she has to give and take…Hisham has been seeing some other woman and, when Lamya confronted him, he said it was all her fault for leaving him and staying in London...`Lamya has to be diplomatic - please him and please herself. That way she can both keep her husband and get her PhD'(Aboulela, 2005, pp. 218-219).

This text is taken from the conversation between Najwa and Dr. Zeinab concerning Lamya's deviant behavior. From the extract, Lamya fails to listen to her husband. Unlike an African feminist woman who deals with her husband systematically to settle any dispute, Lamya arrogantly defies her husband. She decides by her own and cames to London to pursue her PhD leaving him aside, and this creates problem between the husband and the wife. Hence, Dr. Zeinab blames her daughter for she follows only her personal interest rather than negotiating with her

husband, and she argues that she should compromise her interest in order to maintain her marriage in a diplomatic way unless the relationship will fail as her husband Hisham seeks another woman.

Many African feminists come to an agreement that marriage has indisputable significance to African women, but its stability always necessitates the culture of tolerance, negotiation and compromise (Alkali et al., 2013; Arndt, 2002). Thus, Dr. Zeinab urges her daughter that instead of being confrontational and autocrat, Lamya should talk to her husband peacefully and steadily so that she can save both her marriage and education. Aboulela's novel also shows how women can achieve their goal through negotiation. Another female character, Shahinaz realizes her vision of getting education by negotiating with her husband:

> She stands up and moves to the mantelpiece, opens a drawer and comes back with the letter of acceptance. She shows it to me proudly. It is from the same university Tamer attends. She is going to be a mature student. Every day she will go to class and after three years she will get a degree. It is an old wish, a hankering she had had ever since she got married, and then one baby after another dampened her hopes, kept her at home. `Sohayl is supportive,' she says. He wants me to study. He filled the application form for me' (Aboulela, 2005, p. 181).

Shahinaz marries Sohayl without finishing her education. Even though she bears children and is fully committed to nurture her children and treat her husband for many years being a housewife, her hope to continue education has never been lost. She has been compromising her wish of education by treating her husband and children, but through time, she has managed to negotiate the matter with her husband and has convinced him to be supportive. Since Sohayl is cooperative to make his wife's vision realized, he can be an example of a transformed man whom African feminists endeavor to make prevalent. Beyond that, the above excerpt conveys that women are capable of handling both indoor and outdoor activities at the same time.

Regardless of the household burdens waiting for her, Shahinaz is happy and proud as she receives the acceptance letter from the university. She clearly knows that she is responsible to discharge household activities and take care of her children while running her university courses. Nevertheless, she has never shown any fear concerning the workload ahead of her. She is confident enough and enthusiastic to challenge whatever obstacles in running both indoor and

outdoor activities. Najwa's mother also conciliates her class difference as she marries Najwa's father. Najwa's mother, Mania compromising her economic class, decides to get married to the man who is below her class as a resolution method to overcome the disgrace that she faces due to her former husband's abandonment that:

> Her first husband had walked out on her and disappeared…In those days it was a scandal and she was sensitive... No suitors wanted her after that; she was in her twenties and getting no proposals. People said your father proposed because he was ambitious. He was after her money and her family name (Aboulela, 2005, p. 126).

Mania is superior to her husband (Najwa's father) because of her higher economic and social class. However, when she fails to get another husband who suffices her class, Mania has negotiated between remaining unmarried that badly harms her reputation and marrying the man who is below her level that is less threatening. She discards the class differences and is engaged to him. Najwa's father also uses the tactic of compromise because his engagement with his wife does not originate from love; rather he compromises love or his choice with class and money. "He had married above himself, to better himself. His life story was of how he moved from a humble background to become manager of the President's office via marriage into an old wealthy family" (Aboulela, 2005, p. 13). As a result, he is able to hold one of the prominent political offices in the country and gets wealthy for being the husband of the distinguished woman in the nation. Aboulela here confirms that the notion of give and take is not invented by African feminists rather it has been employed in every aspect of African societies as effective tool of attaining one's goal.

7.1.4 Motherhood as Role Model

Irreplaceable role of motherhood with family harmony has been one of the prominent themes of Aboulela's novel, *Minaret* regarding women's issues. The novel maintains African feminists' conception of motherhood as the real identity of African women (Nnaemeka, 2005; Oyewumi, 2003). Najwa considers her mother, Mania as her model whose personality she wants to acquire when she articulates, "I wished I were as glamorous as her, open and generous, always saying the right things, laughing at the right time. One day I would be" (Aboulela, 2005, p. 21). In this quotation, Najwa has been impressed by her mother's manner, and thus she seeks to inherit this personality. Besides, Mania is portrayed as strong woman/ mother who has never submitted

herself to problems. “In crises she had the strength to rise to whatever the situation demanded...She would pull every string, harass my father and harass His Excellency himself until she got what she wanted” (Aboulela, 2005, p. 23). Mania is a self-confident woman who fearlessly challenges every obstacle she encounters in life. Even she can challenge the country’s president so as to achieve her goal. It is also this quality that Najwa wishes to inherit from her mother. Thus, motherhood is a weapon to fight against women suppressive force since children can learn a lot from their mothers’ experiences.

Mania has also an inimitable love and selfless commitment to her children that Najwa describes, “Nothing compared to what my mother had to put up with from Omar. People think the leukemia killed her but it was her broken heart” (Aboulela, 2005, p. 214). Mania dies in London during her exile with her two children. According to Najwa, the reason for her death is her son, Omar’s imprisonment because of drug dealing in the foreign land. Najwa inherits such motherly quality from her mother Mania and refuses to go Canada with Uncle Saleh in order to look after her imprisoned brother in London. ‘“The right thing is for you to come with me to Canada,' said Uncle Saleh. I can't. I need to be near Omar”’ (Aboulela, 2005, p. 112). African mothers are considered as the center of family so that their personality and experiences play indispensible role in shaping their children and their society at large.

As a result, motherhood as family centered struggle has been confirmed in all models of African feminism as one of the best methods to eliminate women’s problems. Aboulela’s representation of Mania as a model mother from whose commitment and personality that her daughter takes lesson and practices in life supports African feminist consideration of motherhood as dignified model from that newer generations can learn tactics of alleviating problems and commitment to support family members and their societies whenever demand arises.

7.1.5 Islam and Women’s Identity

Central and North African novels have been characterized by their strong affiliation with the Islamic religion (Abiye, 1998). *Minaret* confirms this argument since it represents many women characters whose identity is associated with Arab culture as they describe themselves as Muslims:

> Two girls from my class were leaving the library and we smiled at each other...With them I felt, for the first time in my life, self-conscious of my clothes; my too short skirts and too tight blouses…Yet these provincial girls made me feel awkward. I was conscious of their modest grace, of the tobes that covered their slimness-pure white cotton covering their arms and hair (Aboulela, 2005, p. 19).

After realizing the way these provincial girls dress and behave, Najwa becomes conscious about the Muslim tradition that she has neglected being the city girl. In African feminism, particularly in motherism, rural dwellers are considered as the real basis of traditional cultures (Alkali et al., 2013). As a result, since the above-mentioned countryside girls dress and act according to the Islamic dictation, it is possible to say that they express their identity as Islam rather than as Sudanese. Taking lessons from these girls, after she goes to London and becomes a devout Muslim, Najwa calls herself as Muslim rather than Sudanese. She says, "I just think of myself as a Muslim" (Aboulela, 2005, p. 98). Throughout the novel, Najwa has never mentioned any of African/ Sudanese tradition rather than Islamic tradition. Najwa's life is strongly attached to Islamic and Arab culture rather than African one as her day-to-day practice shows.

> I sit on the armchair where Doctor Zeinab used to sit and enjoy the light in the room or watch the Arabic channels on TV. I see the Ka'hah and pilgrims walking around it. I wish I were with them. I see teenage girls wearing hijab and I wish I had done that at their age...The religious programs make me feel solid as if they are telling me, `Don't worry. Allah is looking after you, He will never leave you, He knows you love Him, He knows you are trying and all of this, all of this will be meaningful and worth it in the end (Aboulela, 2005, p. 86).

Najwa spends her free time watching Arab channels and thinking of the Islamic religion. Aboulela's female protagonist, Najwa thinks that her problems will be solved based on Allah's will. This relates Aboulela to the prominent Sudanese novelist, Tayeb Salih, whose novels are associated with Islamic discourses which claim that human being is fated to lead predetermined life, "making the individual a pawn in the hands of God" (Abiye, 1998, p. 65). Moreover, Najwa reveals her strong and non-negotiable attitude towards Islam when she rejects her boyfriend, Anwar, for whom she has paid many sacrifices:

> He believed it was backward to have faith in anything supernatural; angels, djinns, Heaven, Hell, resurrection... But I could never stand up to Anwar...I had given in to him but he had been wrong...Now I wanted a wash, a purge, a restoration of innocence. I yearned to go back to being safe with God (Aboulela, 2005, p. 202).

This citation from *Minaret* clearly depicts how Najwa develops strong devotion towards Islam. Even though Anwar grows up in Sudan with the Islamic tradition, he detests Islam as he is affiliated with the radical socialist political philosophy. She tolerates Anwar in many ways: he nags her father as a corrupt man; he has subjugated and disappointed her many times both in Sudan and in London where they have restored their love. Tolerating his arrogance, she prefers to sustain their relationship and supports him in several ways. For example, she says, "I bought him the best, most up-to-date computer and the day it was delivered was the first day I went to his flat" (Aboulela, 2005, p. 146). However, she is irritated by Anwar's criticism of Islam despite her unconditional love for him.

Even more, being with Anwar, Najwa forgets the commencement of Ramadan fasting, which adds to her exasperation as she states, "I looked at Anwar and he was calm, normal as if nothing unnatural had happened. `Why didn't you tell me?'" (Aboulela, 2005, p. 193). Conversely, Anwar claims that he has no responsibility to remind her when he says, "Why should I?" Yet, Najwa irritably responds, "It's Ramadan. It shouldn't happen without me knowing" (Aboulela, 2005, p. 194). Hence, as soon as she realizes that Ramadan has been started, she abandons him and goes home. When Anwar claims to restore the relationship, she declines arguing, "I can't live a life where I don't even know that Ramadan has started" (Aboulela, 2005, p. 204). This indicates that even though Najwa loves Anwar, she does not want to continue their engagement because of his negative view of Islam.

Indeed, Najwa's strong attachment to Islam can be maintained when she decides to end the love affair with Tamer whom she also loves much. She prefers the compensation money that Tamer's mother, Dr. Zeinab offers to her rather than resisting Tamer's family intervention in their affair as Tamer does because she thinks that she will use the money on her religious journey to Mecca for Hajji. What is more, Najwa claims that her parent's problems result from their denial of the religion as she strives to make her brother, Omar, a devout Muslim:

> Ever since I started to pray and wear hijab, I have been hoping he would change like I've changed. 'Look,' I say, 'I know how you feel. We weren't brought up in a religious way, neither of us...Our house was a house where only the servants prayed...'If Baba and Mania had prayed,' I say, `if you and I had prayed, all of this wouldn't have happened to us. We would have stayed a normal family. 'Allah would have protected us, if we had wanted Him to, if we had asked Him to but we didn't. So we were punished (Aboulela, 2005, p. 84).

Najwa is certain that one cannot lead a trouble free life unless he/she devotedly prays so that she concludes that what has happened to her parents (her father's assassination by government; her brother's imprisonment and her mother's death in a foreign land) is Allah's punishment for being out of the religious line. Hence, Najwa has unquestionable devotion to Islam and embraces it as an ideal expression of her identity. Furthermore, *Minaret* depicts other Sudanese women's identity as Islamic identity as Najwa's narration below reveals.

> We talked about her social life. 'Yes, there were some Sudanese in Edinburgh University - quite a number of families... They invited her for dinner; she always declined. `Why?' I asked. `So many of them are Islamists. You know the type, the wife in hijab having one baby after the other' (Aboulela, 2005, p. 118).

This is a conversation between Najwa and Randa, the Sudanese student in Edinburgh. Despite Randa's negative perception of Islam, it is possible to note from other described characters that Sudanese identity is always expressed in terms of Islam. Randa's hatred of Islam seems to emanate from her parents' Westernized life as Najwa's narration indicates. "Randa's parents were a little mad according to my parents. Ever since they had studied in England, where Randa was born, they had come back with eccentric English habits" (Aboulela, 2005, p. 31). Randa's parents come back to Sudan with an identity crisis since they reject Islamic traditions. Randa inherits such rejection of Islam from her parents who are depicted in the novel as mad or abnormal. Nonetheless, Randa latter becomes Muslim. "In the Eid, Randa phoned from Edinburgh. She had done her best to fast in spite of having to sit for her finals. She had celebrated the Eid with the other Sudanese students in Edinburgh" (Aboulela, 2005, p. 198). Here, Aboulela is saying that even if a Sudanese girl/ woman reflects disinclination to Islam, she must admit that Islam is her

identity. Thus, Randa's commencement of the Ramadan fast implies that she begins embracing Islam as her religion.

What is more, Lamya, who is born from Sudanese father and Egyptian mother "considers herself Arab" (Aboulela, 2005, p. 98). Nonetheless, Lamya is depicted negatively in the novel for she is not a fervent Muslim. "Lamya is wrong...She hardly prays. She doesn't wear hijab... She has such bad friends. They go and see rude films together. They smoke and even drink wine - it's disgusting" (Aboulela, 2005, p. 102). This criticism is made by her younger brother, Tamer who is a devout Muslim as Najwa is. In Tamer's view, even though Lamya's root is Africa, as she considers her identity as Arab, her personality and manner should be guided by Islamic tradition. Aboulela, through contrasting characterization of Lamya and Najwa seems to argue that women who do not stick to the Islamic values can never exhibit desirable manner. Aboulela's depiction of Sudanese women's identity contradicts to African feminists' notion of considering Islam as a non-African religion that ruined indigenous African traditions and belief systems.

In summary, Aboulela's novel, *Minaret* (2005) deals with many issues relating to women. The novel depicts Sudanese capital city as the residence of patriarchal society in which women suffer from restriction and subjugations. Even those educated ones fail to accept equality between men and women. The novel also portrays post-colonial Sudan as problematic to women and other ordinary people. Moreover, the novel supports African feminist notion of establishing negotiation and cooperation between men and women as well as celebration and empowerment of motherhood in order to end problems of women and their respective society. However, *Minaret* claims that the identity of Sudanese women has to be defined interims of Muslim traditions in contrast with many African feminists relegation of the religion as foreign to African tradition that upholds women's oppression and has distracted African indigenous religions.

7.2 Synopsis of *The Yacoubian Building* (2004)

The Yacoubian Building was originally written in Arabic in 2002 and translated into English in 2004 by Humphrey Davies. It is narrated in the third person point of view and begins with a description of the Yacoubian Building, which is located at the center of Cairo. Engineer Zaki Bey el Dessouki, who is the son of the wealthy Egyptian prime minister before the revolution, is one of the residents of the Building. Zaki Bey lives with his elder sister, Dawlat whose two children

(daughter and son) leave her in Cairo and go abroad. He has slept with many women, but at the age of 65, he gets married to Busayna who has been the girlfriend of Taha el Shazli, who is the son of the property guard at Yacoubian Building. Taha is a clever student and joins faculty of Economics at Cairo University, but Sheikh Shakir preaches him to participate in Jihad. Taha participates in the Jihad that aims to establish pure Islamic government in Egypt against the Western democracy, but he is killed by government force. Busayna is a poor girl, and after her father's death, her family life becomes outrageous. Even though she is graduated in commercial diploma and gets a job in many offices, she drops because of sexual harassment by bosses. However, due to her mother's push, she is hired at Mr. Talal's store as sales clerk and has an affair with him to fulfill her family needs by the money she earns from this affair until she meets Zaki.

Souad is another female character who comes from Alexandria to Cairo departing her only son as she marries Hagg Azzam, who is one of the wealthy men in the country as a second wife and places her at the Yacoubian Building to hide his marriage from his elder wife. However, when Souad tells him that she is pregnant their relationship is spoiled. He urges her to abort, but she refuses. He hires people who forcefully take her to hospital and cause abortion without her consent. Finally, he announces to her through his son that he has divorced her offering 20 thousand pounds and if she challenges, he will take serious measure against her and her brother urging the latter to take her back to her home city, Alexandria.

Hatim Rasheed is also one of the residents of the Yacoubian Building. He is a well-known journalist and spends his nights at a secret homosexual bar, Chez Nous at Cairo. He deceives Abd Rabbuh (Abduh), who is a security officer who comes from rural area. Abduh begins homosexual affiliation with Hatim because Hatim gives him much money although Abduh always regrets about the relationship for he considers it a sin. Finally, Abduh kills Hatim after Abduh's son whom he moves from his rural homeland to Cairo with his wife dies.

7.2.1 Women and Post-independence Failure

As many other countries in Africa, post-independence Egypt is not companionable to women according to *The Yacoubian Building*. The narrator describes post-colonial deprived circumstances of the ordinary people in Cairo that "the streets had the look of any urban slum conspicuous poverty, puddles of water in the dirt lanes,...small children playing barefoot, and veiled women sitting at the doors" (Aswany, 2004, p. 193). In post-colonial Cairo in particular and Egypt in

general, women, children and lower class people lead dreadful lives because of the deep-rooted poverty. In this connection, Jacobs (2011) states that women have often suffered excessively in post-colonial African contexts so that the post-independence African situations cannot be dealt with based on Western feminist approaches; hence, African feminism considers multiple sources of suppression in contrast with Western feminism that solely focuses on patriarchal oppression.

Many African feminists agree that the end of colonialism has not brought change to the lives of African women. *The Yacoubian Building* concurs with this argument when the female character, Busayna's ironically questions Zaki Bey, "You made demonstrations to throw out the British? Okay, they went. Does that mean the country's all right?" (Aswany, 2004, p. 200). Zaki Bey belongs to the privileged class of Egypt while Busayna is from the destitute class of the nation. Thus, Busayna argues that the so-called independence has no favorable significance for the majority of Egyptian people. Busayna further describes the despondent conditions of post-colonial Egypt comparing her every-day life with that of fortunate Zaki Bey:

> Busayna was saying bitterly, 'You don't understand because you're well-off. When you've stood for two hours at the bus stop or taken three different buses and had to go through hell every day just to get home, when your house has collapsed and the government has left you sitting with your children in a tent on the street, when the police officer has insulted you and beaten you just because you're on a minibus at night, when you've spent the whole day going around the shops looking for work and there isn't any, when you're a fine sturdy young man with an education and all you have in your pockets is a pound, or sometimes nothing at all, then you'll know why we hate Egypt...All the girls who were with me at commercial school wanted to get out of the country any way they could' (Aswany, 2004, p. 137-138).

Like ordinary people in other African countries, post-colonial Egyptian lower class people and women suffer from underdevelopment and mal-governance system in the nation. Busayna's description reveals that post-colonial Egypt has been hell to poor people. Even though Egyptian people fought against British colonizers and the colonizers left the country, those indigenous politicians who took power from the British fail to fulfill the people's expectations. Hence, Busayna contends that dismantling colonial power cannot bring change to the life of women and poor people. While those on power and elites who took the colonizers' positions lead contented

life, the poor ones still struggle to survive. Particularly, women have been the greatest victims of post-colonial problems like the gloomy circumstances in one of the hospitals in Cairo:

> The women were standing, loaded with their sick children, the smell of sweat was stifling, the floor and walls were filthy, the few male nurses who were organizing entry to the examination room were abusing the women and shoving them, and there was endless fighting, screaming, and tumult (Aswany, 2004, p. 198).

Women are mistreated in the hospital because of their poverty. This is one of the reasons for differentiating African feminism from its Western counterpart. Unlike Western feminists who consider patriarchy as a sole root of women's suppression, African feminists focus on multiple roots of oppression in addition to sexism. As a result, the novel maintains that unless the socio-economic development is achieved in the nation, there is no chance for stopping the suppression of women. In other words, Aswany's novel stresses on the inevitability of bringing all-rounded socio-economic transformation in order to alter the post-independence ugly circumstances that majority of African women have been facing. Indeed, in the novel, a male character, Kamal El Fouli, who is one of the most influential government officials in the post-colonial context of Egypt, thinks that men should restrict women's interests and rights:

> I told the minister of information at the meeting of the Political Bureau, 'This outrage cannot go on! It is our duty to protect family values in this country! Who can accept his daughter or sister watching the dancing and shamelessness that go on on television?...Where is the father or the brother of a girl like that, that they allow her to appear in that filthy way?' (Aswany, 2004, p. 146).

El Fouli maintains the patriarchal ideology that posits that women should always remain under the full control of men. In his view, Egypt should continue preserving the subjugation of women that his fathers and forefathers used to do. Even though many African feminists want to preserve traditional values that have no harm to women (Coetzee, 2017), El Fouli's idea is completely patriarchal since he sanctions only fathers and brothers as authorized to control every act of women (wives, daughters and sisters). In the post-colonial Egyptian government, women remain suppressed, and they do not have the right to be equal citizen. Stratton (1994) underscores that in post-colonial Africa "one of the defining characteristics of the ruling elite is its objectification, as

well as commodification, of women" (p. 162). Aboulela also reveals that when educated women obtain jobs, they are always harassed by bosses and therefore are forced to leave their jobs:

> Busayna put everything she had in her into finding a job... Every job she left for the same reason and after going through the same rigmarole-the warm welcome from the boss accompanied by enormous, burning interest, followed by the little kindnesses and the presents and small gifts of money, with the hints that there was more where that came from.... The boss would keep at it till the business reached its logical conclusion, that final scene that she hated and feared and that always came about when the older man would insist on kissing her by force in the empty office, or press up against her (Aswany, 2004, pp. 41-42).

Because of such sexual abuse, Busayna has dropped many jobs since there is no effective legal system to support her fight against sexual harassment in the nation. Even though women's issues have been written on paper as one of the crosscutting issues, they could not practically help women to free themselves from sexual objectification. Consequently, Busayna prefers leaving the job rather than confronting her abusers in the country where women's suppression became normal. Latter, Busayna understands that she will never get a job by her profession unless she grants her body to the employers for Fifi tells her the reality on the ground that every girl in the nation grants her body to boss so as to stay on her job:

> When Busayna told her about her problem with earlier bosses,... Fifi explained to her that more than ninety percent of bosses did that with the girls who worked for them and that any girl who refused was thrown out and a hundred other girls who didn't object could be found to take her place (Aswany, 2004, p. 43).

As Busayna realizes this painful reality, she convinces herself that she can no longer become successful by her profession so that she decides to sell her body to get rid of poverty as long as her education cannot help her. Thus, she grants herself as a sex slave to Mr. Talal who is the owner of Shanan closing store although she knows that he has beautiful wife who "had borne him two sons" (Aswany, 2004, p. 44). Wealthy post-colonial Egyptian men sexually abuse poor women while keeping their wives at home. Whatever an outstanding and smart professional a woman is, her boss always sees her from the perspective of her body, and her performance is evaluated from

how she sexually pleases her boss. For instance, Busayna is graduated in diploma, but she gets the job not for the qualification she possesses, but for her body. “Talal shook Busayna's hand (giving it a squeeze) and never raised his eyes from her chest and body while he spoke. After a few minutes, she started her new job” (Aswany, 2004, p. 44). Thus, Talal considers women as sex slaves when he attentively gazes at Busayna’s body and gives her the job because of her body in which he wishes to satisfy his sexual desire. Such experience leads Busayna to conclude “that all men, however respectable in appearance and however elevated their position in society, were utter weaklings in front of a beautiful woman” (Aswany, 2004, p. 42). This women suppressive condition leads Busayna to hate Egypt and she wishes to go abroad as she says, “I want to go abroad…Earn my living from my work instead of going to the storeroom with someone like Talal so that he'll give me ten pounds, the cost of two packs of Marlboros” (Aswany, 2004, p. 200). Unless women submit themselves to their bosses, they do not have guaranty to retain their jobs. Even their degrees or diplomas remain meaningless if they do not have sexy bodies that attract men who control the economic power of the country.

In this regard, Aswany’s representation of Busayna is similar with that of Kenyan novelist Ngugi’s portrayal of Wariinga in *Devil on the Cross* as Stratton (1994) argues, “Sexually abused and exploited by the men of the new ruling class, Wariinga provides a useful symbol for the degraded state of neo-colonial Kenya. In order to secure employment, she must first satisfy the demands of the boss whose target is [always her] thighs” (p. 160). Hence, it is possible to argue that in post-colonial African nations, sexual objectification of women has been common so that novelists like Aswany and Ngugi have exposed such like post-independence problems of women in the continent. They call for socio-cultural transformations where such objectification of women should be terminated so that every woman can be seen as equal to men and get respect and dignity in her society in particular and at national or international levels.

Sexual exploitation of women is common for every woman so that in post-colonial Egypt a woman can never be rich if she does not sell her body. This is why observing every successful woman who comes to Talal’s shop, Busayna “would contemplate the shop's rich, chic, women customers and ask herself with spiteful passion, ‘I wonder how many times that woman surrendered her body to get to where she is now?’" (Aswany, 2004, p. 46). The trend of viewing women from the perspective of body has been attributed to colonialism because in European

thought, women are assumed to be embodied as the woman of the body while men are perceived as walking minds who have no bodies or men possess mind that enable them to be reasonable thinkers (Oyewumi, 2003). The practicality of this colonial sexist ideology in post-colonial Egypt maintains the relentlessness of colonial effect on the lives of contemporary African women. Souad also engages in an exploitive sexual relationship because of poverty:

> She had gone hungry, begged, and tasted humiliation, and a hundred times refused to go astray, and in the end she had given her body to a man as old as her father...she was forced every night to turn on the lights in order to dispel the lonesomeness...and when Azzam's appointed time came, to do herself up for him and play out the role for which she had been paid (Aswany, 2004, p. 176).

Suoad is not interested in Azzam and she sleeps with him for it is the only means to get rid of poverty. She is obliged to be a sex instrument for he has unquestionable right to use as object whenever he desires. In fact, Azzam is at first interested in her sexual body rather than her personality because "he has the right to come to her whenever and however he wishes, and it is her obligation always to be ready" (Aswany, 2004, p. 129). Hagg Azzam, who is one of the wealthiest men in Egypt marries the poor widow woman, Souad only to satisfy his sexual desires because "Hagga Salha, his wife…was unable to satisfy him" (Aswany, 2004, pp. 51-52). Hence, Salha does not know his affiliation with Souad and Azzam has chosen her because she is poor and cannot complain if he mistreats her. "What pleased him specially was the meekness that poverty and a hard life had left her with" (Aswany, 2004, p. 54). Souad may not have confidence to claim her right as a wife. Appallingly, when Souad gets pregnant, Azzam urges her to abort although "she adamantly refused the very idea of an abortion" (Aswany, 2004, p. 170). However, using his economic power, Azzam hires gangsters who have forcefully taken her to hospital and bribed doctors there who have done the job. "Shouted Souad in a strangled voice."You aborted me by force. I'll see you get hell!.. Criminals! You aborted me! Get me the Emergency Response Police! I'll put you all in jail!" (Aswany, 2004, p. 194). As Souad has received anesthesia, she becomes unconscious and only she knows after everything is completed that the doctors forcefully aborted her pregnancy because they take money from Azzam to do so. Although Souad attempts to confront the criminals, Azzam's son, Fawzi warns her and her brother Hamidu saying, "This country is ours, Hamidu. We have a long reach and we have all kinds of ways of dealing with

people" (Aswany, 2004, p. 196). Finally, Azzam divorces her without her agreement that she hears from Fawzi who says, "He has divorced you and given you more than your rights" (Aswany, 2004, p. 95). This implies that in post-colonial Egypt, law has been interpreted based on wealth so that those who have money buy justice while the poor are denied their legal rights. Thus, Aswany portrays post-colonial Egypt as the lawless country where the wealthy men have unquestionable power to do whatever they like on women and poor people.

7.2.2 Motherhood and Family Relations

In relation to motherhood and family concerns, Aswany (2004) depicts two types of female characters: those who show motherly commitment and those who lack motherhood attribute. To begin with the first type, for instance, Souad is characterized as a dedicated selfless mother who has sold her body in order to grow her child:

> When Hagg Azzam asked for her hand in legal marriage, she worked things out minutely. She would give the Hagg her body in return for her son's expenses. She never touched the dowry that Hagg Azzam gave her but deposited it in Tamir's name in the bank so that it would triple in ten years...She would sleep with this old man for two hours every day, leave her son in Alexandria, and collect her wages (Aswany, 2004, pp. 127-128).

By selling her body to the old man, Souad strives to make her son's future bright. Putting aside her personal interests and wills, she prioritizes her son's comfort so that her life is entirely devoted to him. She refrains from using the money that Azzam has given her in order to fulfill her temporary needs since she projects that her son's future might be destined to poverty unless she saves what she is earning. Despite the difficulty that Souad meets to grow her only child, she thinks that motherhood is an ideal identity of womanhood through which any woman gets respect and dignity. This is why she resists Azzam when he forces her to abort:

> A deep-seated, instinctive desire drove her to fight ferociously in defense of her pregnancy. She felt as though if she bore the child, she would recover her self-respect...She would no longer be the poor woman whom the millionaire Azzam had purchased to enjoy himself with for a couple of hours in the afternoon but a real wife who could not be ignored or slighted (Aswany, 2004, p. 176).

This implies that motherhood can be a negotiation tool through which women can reduce patriarchal oppression. Even though Souad has married Hagg Azzam with a legal contract, she considers herself a sex slave and thinks that she cannot get wifehood respect unless she bears a child to him. However, the marriage contract she has signed at the beginning bans her from childbearing. It states that "the marriage was to be conducted according to the norms set by God and His Prophet, he had no desire whatsoever for offspring…if Souad got pregnant, the agreement would be considered abrogated forthwith" (Aswany, 2004, p. 55). Regardless of this contract, Souad strives to negotiate with Azzam since she becomes pregnant although she is unable to convince him and has come to be subject to forced abortion. What is significant to note here is that in spite of the agreement and a despondent circumstance through which she has passed, Souad's longing to bear a child reflects her regard to and commitment to motherhood. Quite the reverse, some women characters are portrayed against African feminists' notion of motherhood. African feminism conceives motherhood as a selfless personality that every woman is expected to love and nurture her children and society regardless of the difficulty she encounters in life (Arndt, 2002; Nnaemeka, 2005). However, in *The Yacoubian Building*, Busayna's mother deviates from this principle. The excerpt below maintains how she submits herself to a problem and thus denies motherly love to her children.

> Her father had died suddenly and with the passing of the mourning period the family found itself destitute. The pension was meager and did not cover the costs of schooling, food, clothes, and rent. Her mother soon changed...Little by little she grew bad-tempered and took to quarreling all the time with the girls; even little Mustafa wasn't spared her beatings and abuse (Aswany, 2004, p. 40).

In the extract, one might feel sympathy for Busayna's mother, but her action is far from African feminist expectation of motherhood. First, most African mothers are not dependent on their husbands and are strong enough to resolve every problem they meet in life; however, Busayna's mother is very weak and unable to nurture her children in the absence of her husband. Second, in African feminism, mothers are believed to show relentless love and care towards their children under whatever circumstances they are. Nevertheless, Busayna's mother's affection towards her children can easily be affected by her condition. To the worst, she compels Busayna to sell her body to support herself and her children:

> Her mother had changed completely, for whenever Busayna left a job because of the men's importunities, her mother would greet the news with a silence akin to exasperation and on one occasion, after it had happened several times, she told Busayna as she got up to leave the room, 'Your brother and sisters need every penny you earn. A clever girl can look after herself and keep her job.' This sentence saddened and puzzled Busayna (Aswany, 2004, p. 42).

Beyond poverty, it is her mother's complain that forces Busayna to engage in exploitative sexual relationship with Talal. Although Busayna does not have children, she is engaged in a sexual affair with Mr. Tatal in order to support her poor family "repeating to herself in her head her mother's words"(Aswany, 2004, p. 45). Hence, Busayna's mother has compelled her to use her body in order to liberate the family from the agony of poverty. Busayna's mother leaves her motherly responsibility to her daughter so that Busayna engages in the affair without having interest:

> She started making money and wearing nice clothes and her mother was pleased with her and was comforted by the money that she took from her and tucked into the front of her dress, uttering warm blessings for her after doing so. Listening to these, Busayna was overwhelmed with a mysterious, malign desire to start giving her mother clear hints about her relationship with Talal, but her mother would ignore any such messages. Busayna would then go to such lengths with her hints that the mother's refusal to acknowledge them became obvious and extremely fragile, at which point Busayna would feel some relief, as though she had snatched away her mother's mask of false innocence and confirmed her complicity in the crime (Aswany, 2004, p. 46).

Busayna's mother does not attempt to bring out her daughter from Talal's sexual abuse even though Busayna herself wants her to know how she has been earning the money, which the family members including her mother are enjoying. Instead, by offering blessings, she encourages Busayna to stay in such a miserable life as long as the money she brings enables her to lead a comfortable life. Thus, Busayna's mother has deviant and negative attributes that African feminism seriously condemns. Similarly, Aswany (2004) reinforces African feminists' critique of Western culture and feminism, in which parents give little attention to their children when a French female character, Jeanette has little/ no concern towards her only son that:

> During his studies in Paris, Dr. Rasheed met a French woman, Jeanette, and fell in love with her. Then he brought her with him to Egypt and married her and they had their only son, Hatim. The family lived a life that was European in both form and essence…Since Dr. Rasheed was always absorbed in his research and lecturing and because his wife Jeanette's job as a translator at the French embassy occupied all her time, their son Hatim spent his childhood sad and lonely...And along with the painful loneliness, there were the feelings of alienation and mental confusion from which the children of mixed marriages suffer. Little Hatim spent a lot of time with the servants (Aswany, 2004, p. 74).

This ironically strengthens the irreplaceable role of parents' or mother's close care and nurturing in shaping child's behavior and life. As Hatim's parents lead Western life style and give priority to their work rather than to their only son, Hatim's psychology has been badly affected. Unlike an African woman who always gives priority and unconditional care to her children, Hatim's mother attends to her work at the expense of her only child. Hatim becomes victim of homosexuality since his childhood as he always stays with servants and Idris, one of the servants, enjoys sex with him:

> His mother, Jeanette, he would also confront with the truth. 'You were poor and uneducated and your marriage to my father was a bigger social leap than you'd ever dreamed of. Despite this, you spent the next thirty years despising my father and blackmailing him because he was Egyptian and you were French. You played the role of the cultured European among the savages....Your neglect of me was part of your hatred for Egypt…In these black moments, despair seizes Hatim, his sense of humiliation tears at him, and he surrenders himself to weeping like a child (Aswany, 2004, pp. 182-183).

Hatim attributes responsibility for his present miserable life to his negligent parents, particularly to his mother who is an European and has blind hatred for African people and culture in general and Egyptian one in particular. She stereotypically relegates her son's country, Egypt and its people considering herself and her European culture as privileged and different from that of savage African one. Even though Jeanette is married to African man and lives in Egypt, she has no single attribute of motherhood. She lacks motherly qualities such as loyalty, truthfulness, respectfulness, love and commitment to her family and child. Consequently, she becomes a curse rather than

blessing to her only son, and her failure to discharge motherly responsibility leads her son to live a sorrowful and scandal homosexual life in a place where homosexuality is regarded as immoral.

Moreover, another Egyptian woman character, Dawlat fail to acquire qualities of African motherhood or womanhood. African feminists perceive the concept of motherhood beyond the biological role or bearing child. African mothers' love and concern is not restricted to their children; rather they are nurturer of their family and community as a whole (Arndt, 2002; Ogunyemi, 1985). In African cultures, elder sisters are viewed as second mothers of their siblings. However, Dawlat wants to dismiss her younger brother, Zaki for the sake of inheriting his wealth. Zaki says, "Dawlat is bringing a case to have me declared legally incompetent…she's asked the court to prevent me from disposing of my property…so that she can inherit from me while I'm still alive" (Aswany, 2004, p. 136). As the elder sister, Dawlat is expected to support Zaki in every aspect, but instead she harasses him as a bad enemy for she focuses on material benefit rather than kinship solidarity, which is highly celebrated in African culture. Indeed, Dawlat by bribing security officers tries to pester Zaki Bey:

> Dawlat had laid her plan carefully and been able by means of influence and bribes to get all the officers on her side. As a result, they treated Zaki el Dessouki with the utmost boorishness and impertinence. They exchanged comments at his expense…They let out loud laughs…Dawlat joining in the laughter to flatter and encourage them, and to gloat. Zaki said nothing…he realized that if he resisted, it would only increase their vile behavior. He also felt extremely sorry for Busayna, who never stopped sobbing (Aswany, 2004, pp. 212-213).

Contrary to the behavior of decent African mother or sister, Dawlat disgraces her only brother by bribing police so that the police arrest him with his girlfriend. Hence, even though Dawlat is an African woman and mother of two children, her obsession with money seizes her back to stay out of the limitless love and affection that any African woman is expected to offer to her family. Unlike the young female character, Busayna who sells her body to support her sisters, Dawlat harms her belly-brother in order to seize his possessions while he is alive. Dawlat is a mother of two children and lives with her brother Zaki after her first husband dies and her second and third marriage fail as well as her two children have gone abroad. Zaki and Dawlat live in their parents' apartment in Cairo and Zaki has office at the Yacoubian Building where he lives with his

girlfriend Busayna when Dawlat expels him from their parents' house. In sum, Aswany's novel maintains the need for retaining attributes of African motherhood and family relations by comparatively depicting women characters those exhibit desirable attributes with those who fail to acquire such demanding qualities that concur with African feminists' expectations and preference of behavior from an African woman.

7.2.3 Complementarity

Many African feminists agree that unlike Western feminism in which men and women are considered as binary opposites, African cultures regard women and men as binary complementarity (Arndt, 2002; Kolawole, 2004; Nnaemeka, 2003; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994). Instead of perceiving men as enemies who oppress women, African feminists embrace men as their allies in their struggle against suppression, and argue that women remain incomplete in life without men and vice-versa. *The Yacoubian Building* underscores this point through many characters. For instance, one of the main male characters, Zaki Bey, has been leading a despairing life because he is not married:

> If he had gotten married, he would now have grown-up children to take care of him and grandchildren to play with and love. If he'd had even just one child, Dawlat would not have done all that to him, and if he'd married, he wouldn't feel that killing, agonizing loneliness (Aswany, 2004, p. 112).

Zaki Bey has led a bachelor life until he is 65 years old, but he has had sexual affair with many women because of his privileged economic position. However, this does not protect him from loneliness so that he concludes that his whole life has been empty since he does not have his own family. This is why "he regretted not being married" (Aswany, 2004, p. 135). As he is not married and does not bear children who could be his protectors, he does not have security in old age. He realizes that his wealth and education are not sufficient to give him complete sense of humanity unless he gets married to a woman. Similarly, Busayna wants a husband as a complementary one:

> At the time Busayna was studying for a commercial diploma and had dreams for the future...she was going to graduate and marry her sweetheart Taha el Shazli after he graduated from the Police Academy...and they would live in a nice spacious apartment and they would have just one boy and one girl (Aswany, 2004, p. 40).

It is possible to argue that Busayna's wish cannot be fulfilled without a man. She considers man (husband) as her complement without whom her dream would remain incomplete even though she knows that her education will help her to be economically dependent. As many African feminists concur, Busayna conceives man as her binary complementary partner rather than opposite who is always blamed for suppressing women in Western radical feminism. Although her dream of marrying Taha has been aborted, she has fulfilled it later when she meets Zaki Bey:

> She cannot describe her feelings with any other word than love. It wasn't the hot, burning love she'd felt for Taha but another different kind of love, calm and deep-seated, something closer to peace of mind, and confidence, and respect. She loved him, and having worked that out she was freed forever from her misgivings. She began to live carefree and happy started spending most of the day and a good part of the night with Zaki (Aswany, 2004, p. 188).

Busayna exhibits an important place of man in a woman's life. This is why African feminists argue that even though there are men who suppress women, not all men should be regarded as oppressors of women. Busayna's life has been full of hitches because of poverty that compels her to end the affair with Taha. Hence, until she encounters Zaki Bey, she has never had a joyful life. Yet, Zaki's care and love makes her a complete woman who enjoys a pleasant life so that "the wedding party of Zaki Bey el Dessouki to Busayna el Sayed" (Aswany, 2004, p. 245) has been wonderfully held. In contrast to Western radical feminism that claims that a woman's problem can only be resolved when she rejects a man and is able to secure independent life, Busayna feels security and peace as she maintains strong connection with Zaki Bey who is a man. This point is further strengthened in the novel when "the girls of marriageable age came in their best and smartest clothes, conscious of the opportunity for marriage that was implicit in the wedding" (Aswany, 2004, p. 244). This implies that contemporary girls/ women of Egypt consider heterosexual marriage as one of the most basic requirements of womanhood and such women consider men as their complementary allies without whom their womanhood cannot be attained.

Moreover, in *The Yacoubian Building*, there are also women characters that cannot lead a happy life without men when some of them suffer due to either their male partners' death or failure of marriage. For example, Souad used to lead a joyful life with "Masoud, her first husband, with

whom she knew love for the first time…all that she'd wanted from the world was for them to live together and raise a boy; she swore she didn't want money and she didn't have any demands"(Aswany, 2004, p. 126). This denotes that men occupy irreplaceable significance in women's life. Although Souad knows that her husband is poor, his love and care makes her a complete woman who cannot seek material wealth. Nevertheless, because of poverty, Masoud "abandoned her and gone off to Iraq, where nothing more was heard from him; the court had granted her a divorce" (Aswany, 2004, p. 54). Although she expects his return, he has never come back so that she gets in deep-rooted poverty and unable to raise her only son, and therefore, she is willingly abused by Hagg Azzam in order to get money. Souad has recognized her poverty after Masoud leaves her because his presence with her has been filling every gap in her lives.

On the other hand, Dawlat is from the privileged class that does not have economic problems, and she is the mother of two fully-grown children: "her daughter grew up, married, and emigrated to Canada. When her son graduated from the School of Medicine, the young doctor, like most ofhis generation, was sick to despair of the situation in Egypt" (Aswany, 2004, p. 66). However, Dawlat prefers a married life even after her first husband died. She "remarried twice after him-two failed marriages that left her bitter, nervy, and a cigarette smoker" (Aswany, 2004, p. 66). This indicates that what sadden Dawlat more is not her first husband's death but the failure of her second and third marriages. Dawlat truly regards man (husband) as her complement without whom material wealth cannot satisfy her life. In other words, even though Dawlat has become rich, she cannot secure a peaceful life because of lack of men in her lives.

Briefly, Aswany shows that complementary relationships between men and women play a crucial role that can never be replaced by material fulfillment in human life. *The Yacoubian Building* agrees with African feminist notion of restoring complementary relationship between men and women in order to alleviate problems of African women and their respective societies.

7.2.4 Women and Religion

Many African feminists criticize both Islam and Christianity for strengthening patriarchal ideology. They also consider the religions as non-African destroyers of the indigenous spiritual and cultural traditions of African societies (Adamu, 2006; Ogunyemi, 1985; Stratton, 1994). As

Egypt is one of the African countries where Islamic religion conquered, Aswany (2004) depicts how the leaders maintain the patriarchal subjugation of women:

> Sheikh El Samman delivers at the Salam Mosque in Medinet Nasr, HaggAzzam requested a private interview with the sheikh and talked to him about his problem. The sheikh listened attentively, was silent for a while, then said with a vehemence that was not far from anger, '... God has made marriage to more than one wife lawful for you so long as you behave with justice. Put your trust in God and make haste to do what is right before you fall into what is wrong!' (Aswany, 2004, p. 52).

Hagg Azzam consults with Sheikh El Samman about his problem of having sex with his first wife who tells him that they are too old to have sex. The Sheikh advises him to get married to another woman. The problem with the sheikh is not his encouragement of bigamy, but his agreement to hide Azzam's second marriage from his first wife. He has participated in the contractual agreement process between Souad and Azzam that states, "The marriage should remain a secret and in the case of Hagga Salha, his wife, finding out about he would be compelled to divorce Souad forthwith" (Aswany, 2004, p. 54). This implies that the religious leader acknowledges such fake marriage for it is carried out based on the Islamic norm. In fact, even the Sheikh strives to force Souad to abort:

> Sheikh el Samman asked the question with feigned astonishment and turned to Souad…'Listen, my daughter. You're a Muslim and follow God's Law, and Our Lord, Glorious and Almighty, has commanded the wife to obey her husband in all matters of this world. The Chosen One-God's blessings and peace be upon him-has even said, in a sound hadith, 'Were any of God's creatures permitted to prostrate itself to another of His creatures, I would have commanded the wife to prostrate herself to the husband' (Aswany, 2004, p. 173).

Aswany seems to disclose how this religion and its leaders endeavor to make women submissive to patriarchal ideology. The Sheikh utters the above advice to Souad in order to persuade her to abort her pregnancy for her husband does not want it. When Souad confronts him saying, "Is the woman supposed to follow her husband's orders with regard to what is right or what is wrong? ...So you agree that I should abort myself?" (Aswany, 2004, p. 173), the Sheikh replies, "Abortion

is of course a sin. However, some trust- worthy jurisprudential opinions affirm that termination of the pregnancy during the first two months is not abortion because the soul enters the fetus at the beginning of the third month" (Aswany, 2004, p. 174). Although the Sheikh knows that abortion is sinful, he compels Souad to commit the sin for the sake of pleasing her husband. Nonetheless, Souad with all her mighty confronts the sheikh:

> Souad laughed sarcastically and said bitterly, 'Those must have been American sheikhs…So if I abort myself it won't be a sin? ...There's no way I could believe you even if you swore on the Qur'an!... You've paid him off to say a couple of stupid things...Shame on you, Sheikh' (Aswany, 2004, pp. 173-174).

The attack by Souad against Sheikh el Samman implies Souad's disillusionment about the religious leaders' deceptive use of the power that the religion granted them. Such religious leaders have been deceiving many women to be submissive to their husbands. In addition, another Islamic leader, Sheikh Shakir limits women's role to material purpose when he advises a young boy, Taha saying, "Prophet-God bless him and give him peace-said, A woman may be taken in marriage for her beauty, her wealth, or her religion" (Aswany, 2004, p. 119). According to such preaching, a man should marry a woman just for the sake of her body and her material possession rather than considering her as his complement.

In short, Aswany (2004) in *The Yacoubian Building* discusses multiple roots of women's suppression. Post-independence Egyptian women are loaded by problems that emanate from patriarchy, religion, post-independence failure: such as poverty, corruption, sexual abuse, mal-governance and others. In alleviating these problems, Aswany maintains African feminist notion of motherhood, family relation, and men to women solidarity and cooperation. Even though many female characters in the novel strongly challenge oppressive practices and ideas, they are unable to win their oppressors. Hence, most female characters of the novel are victims of suppression.

Chapter Eight: Comparative Discussion:Thematic Convergences and Divergences

In this chapter, all the novels analyzed in the preceding chapters are brought together to make a comparative discussion using the post-colonial comparative model. Thus, major thematic features of the novels are compared based on the interpretations made in the foregoing chapters. Henceforth, many ideas presented in this chapter refer to what has been investigated in earlier chapters. In that way, the first part of the chapter (8.1) deals with common thematic issues of the eight novels while the second part (8.2) presents differences among the novels.

8.1 Thematic Convergences

Even though the novels under scrutiny are selected from different African countries that have distinctive socio-cultural realities from one another, all eight novels share many themes concerning depiction of women's issues. The shared themes are discussed below based on the post-colonial comparative model.

8.1.1 Resistance to Patriarchal Oppression

Ezeaku (2014) has stated that African feminist novels expose the gender imbalance in societies and the dehumanized images of women as well suggest various resistance ways that solicit condemnation of such attitudes. To this end, all the selected novels in this research expose and resist the patriarchal oppression of women in their respective country.

To begin with, the Ugandan woman novelist, Makumbi in *Kintu* (2014) criticizes patriarchal oppression of women starting from the pre-colonial time of Buganda Kingdom to the present day Uganda. In the traditional Buganda society, women had been considered as mere objects that men, particularly royals, can use and leave them as fathers had been offering their daughters as mere gifts to please their leaders. Awfully, the culture obliged twin girls to share the same husband. As Nnakato fails to bear a child, Kintu sexually abuses Babirye whom he refuses to marry against the tradition that obligates him not to separate twin sisters when he sleeps with her with the intension only to get children. Nevertheless, minor female characters of *Kintu* such as Zaya and Mazzi in pre-colonial Buganda stand against traditional gender roles as they refuse to submit themselves to their respective husband. Zaya has been interested in works that have been solely given to men

while Mazzi abandons her husband just to dump the traditional gender roles that urge women to discharge household routines such as cooking food and treating husbands. Likewise, the contemporary female character, Magda, although she strives to preserve the less oppressive Ganda traditions, wants to change oppressive ones. Furthermore, female characters such as Nnassolo in Buganda Kingdom and Kusi in post-colonial Uganda are also portrayed as a strong fighter who defeats King and a prominent modern military leader respectively. The Somali author, Farah in *Hiding in Plain Sight* (2014) also discloses and challenges the patriarchal oppression of women. Even though the male character, Aar is presented in the novel as an advocate of women's freedom in various ways his son, Salif seems to be patriarchal when he subjugates his sister, Dahaba. It is this patriarchal attitude of Salif that Bella strives to correct while upbringing him. Moreover, even though Bella admires many Somali and other African traditional cultural values, she badly condemns the prevalent patriarchal oppression of women. Furthermore, Hurdo fights against patriarchal oppression engineered by Islam when she defends Bella from Digaaleh's imposition that demands her to stop her favorite modeling profession.

In like manner, the Sierra Leonean female novelist, Forna's *Ancestor Stones* unveils injustices of institution of polygamy that grants unquestionable authority to the head wife. Polygamy creates partiality among co-wives as it privileges the first and most loved wife. As Makumbi's novel portrays that the Ugandan Ganda tradition of polygamy allows a man to marry sisters (Kintu marries twin sisters: Nnakato and Babirye) Forna (2006) also shows the existence of such tradition in the Sierra Leonean polygamous institution when two sisters: Ya Jeneba and Ya Sallay marry Gibril although they are not twins. However, *Ancestor Stone* does not totally blame the institution of polygamy. Women characters such as Asana and Hawa prefer polygamous men in order to lessen their household burdens, and characters such as Saffie, Asana and Serah have challenged subjugations of women using the tactics of African feminism.

Concomitantly, the Nigerian novel, *Season of Crimson Blossoms* discloses how male polygamy has been accepted and appreciated by the Nigerian Hausa society so that its effect leads the co-wives to hate each other, and thus the co-wives lead insecure and disturbed lives as they fear losing their husband. Moreover, similar to Makumbi's *Kintu*, Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms* criticizes the patriarchal tradition that gives fathers the right to consider their daughters as mere objects that can simply be offered to a friend as a gift. Maimuna father, Buba Mohammed

forcefully gives her to his friend Babale who is old enough to be her father. However, Maimuna has resisted unequal marriage and migrated instead. Equally, Binta's daughter Hureira reverses the patriarchal command as she dominates her husband. What is more, Binta's engagement in the forbidden sexual relation with Reza also indicates that patriarchal ideology has been being destabilized. The female character, Fa'iza also disobeys the patriarchal tradition in which girls are compelled to get married to men whom they do not love and even they do not know.

Analogously, the South African novel, *Coconut* depicts the existence of patriarchal suppression of women in post-apartheid South Africa. Gemina has been economically dependent on her husband, John who is responsible for the family income. Gemina is fully engaged in household activities she does not have her own means of income. Due to this, John oppresses her in many ways including committing adultery upon his marriage. As well, in Zimbabwe's *The Hairdresser of Harare*, Huchu uncovers how patriarchal ideology oppresses women in post-colonial Zimbabwe. For instance, the black tycoon, Phillip degrades Vimbai's personality to simple object that he can buy and make her his sexual slave. Even to the worst, as the novel reveals, religious leaders sexually abuse their female followers. Nevertheless, the novel also brings other strong women characters. The Minister passes through difficulties and succeeds in holding one of the highest leadership positions in the nation that had been given to men. Even more, Mrs. Kumalo owns many business enterprises despite the patriarchal assumption that relegates women as economically dependent on men. Lastly, Dumisani's engagement in the hairdressing occupation that has been solely given to women as well as Vimbai's confrontation with her brothers upon inheritance right projects the need for cultural transformation.

What is more, the Central African novel, *Minaret* reveals how patriarchal ideology oppresses women in the post-colonial Sudanese capital Khartoum. The female protagonist Najwa is socialized in the patriarchal way despite the fact that her father is one of the prominent government officials. Her father encourages her twin brother, Omar to be a diligent student whereas he neglects Najwa and even restricts her from political participation because she is a female. Besides, Najwa miserably discloses that the contemporary society of Khartoum badly suppresses women by condemning them when they are seen in public for instance. Likewise, the North African novel, *The Yacoubian Building* criticizes how the post-colonial Egyptian Bourgeois sexually exploit women because of their poverty. Female characters such as Busayna and Souad

are forced to sell their bodies to these wealthy men in order to cope with poverty. Similar to Vimbai, the female protagonist of Zimbabwean, *The Hairdresser of Harare*, Souad in *The Yacoubian Building* has been exploited by Hagg Azzam and Busayna by Mr. Talal.

8.1.2 Women and Post-independence Impediments

All the selected novels in this study broadly deal with effects of post-independence African failure to bring all rounded development on the lives of women. For instance, *Kintu* depicts the impact of post-independence trajectories. Many women characters of the novel suffer from post-colonial poverty. These women characters lead miserable lives in rented rooms in contemporary Ugandan context. In addition, women characters like Suubi are forced to stop their education due to poverty. Moreover, some wealthy men sexually abuse poor girls using their poverty as a gateway.

Likewise, *Hiding in Plain Sight* reveals the consequences of post-independence civil war on Somali women. Because of the war, women characters such as Hurdo and Bella are forced to leave their beloved country. Bella has also lost her beloved brother to the war and is required to take care of her deceased brother's children in a foreign land. To this end, Bella argues that Africa should be a convenient place to exercise freedom without restriction. Bella's concern is not restricted to women but extended to all human beings. Thus, she argues that human beings should not be prohibited from exercising their will freely. In order to bring freedom to women and generally to human beings, governments should bring a fully-fledged democracy. Unless democracy is granted, it is impossible to free women from oppression. As a result, Bella wants to transform such domineering practices and ideologies. Similarly, her mother, Hurdo and her brother, Aar struggle to create a conducive environment for women in which oppressive traditions should be transformed into a democratic way that grants rights to women.

Equally, Forna's *Ancestor Stones* broadly investigates the effect of post-colonial failure on the life of women and ordinary people of post-colonial Sierra Leone. Women characters such as Serah, Abie and Mariama condemn the leaders of their nation who took the power from the British colonial rulers. Thus, these characters portray post-colonial Sierra Leone as a land of many snags like military coup, political instability, and corrupt leaders. In the same way, the Nigerian novel, *Season of Crimson Blossoms* depicts prevalence of poverty in a contemporary Nigerian context. Many women characters do not have their own means of income. Even the protagonist, Binta, who

is professional teacher, is economically dependent on her son, Mankaila due to political instability in post-colonial Nigeria. Again, younger women characters like Hadiza and Hureira are dependent on their respective husbands to get their basic needs.

Matlwa's *Coconut* similarly depicts the post-apartheid failure of South African political elite. Like her fellow Eastern and Western novelists, the South African black female novelist Matlwa in *Coconut* discloses the frightful and gloomy lives of the contemporary black South African women. The black South Africans remain poor and lead miserable lives while their White counterparts sustain their cultural and economic hegemony in post-colonial South Africa. Huchu's *The Hairdresser of Harare* also divulges post-colonial malfunctions of contemporary Zimbabwe. The protagonist of the novel, Vimbai, gets in to an affair with a rich man in order to get rid of poverty. In addition, rural girls such as Maidei migrate to cities in search of better lives but end up in misery as a housemaid. The novel also exposes outrageous conditions of the post-independent and post-Millennium Zimbabwe including sexual abuse of children, and poor girls and the severity of street orphan children's lives.

The Sudanese female writer, Aboulela's *Minaret* also represents post-colonial Sudan as hell for ordinary people in general and women in particular. For instance, a military coup has taken the life of Najwa's father and leads her family to exile where Najwa meets burdens of life. Aswany's *The Yacoubian Building* on the other hand exposes how post-colonial corruption affects women's lives. In post-colonial Egypt, some women graduate from colleges and get jobs; they are obliged to be sex objects by male bosses. Busayna has been harassed by many bosses and is forced to leave jobs although due to poverty she is latter engaged in such an affair. Aswany also depicts how women and lower class people suffer from mal-governance and underdevelopments.

8.1.3 Representation of Motherhood

According to Maerten (2004), in most African cultures, motherhood is an intrinsic feature of womanhood and has been accepted without interrogation. The theme of motherhood is one of the most commonly shared themes in all novels under investigation. Makumbi (2014) in *Kintu* deals with a motherhood issue through the characterization of Faisi. Faisi refuses to handle her daughter, Ruth's unexpected pregnancy, and Ruth has been forced to deliver at the house of her aunt, Magda. In addition, Faisi deviates from African mothers' norm that expects them to value their tradition and puts them at the hub to transfer it from generation to generation. Moreover,

Faisi's personality is deviant for she fails to be a good model to her children and this humiliates her children. This means that mothers who fail to portray a good personality lead their children to psychological injury. In contrast, the non-literate rural woman character, Magda is equipped with motherly qualities. Similar with Farah's protagonist Bella, Magda takes sisterly and motherly responsibility by taking care of her cousin's daughter Ruth.

Comparably, the Somali novel, *Hiding in Plain Sight* comparatively portrays the demanding personality and determination of mothering through characterization of Valerie, Hurdo and Bella. Valerie, who is a mother of two children, Salif and Dahaba, fails to attain her maternal role as she prioritizes her personal interest over her children. Valerie, leaving her two little children in a foreign land, follows Padmni in a lesbian relationship. However, many African feminists believe that mothering is a selfless commitment that demands that a woman to give unreserved love, treatment and guidance to her children (Arndt, 2002; Oyewumi, 2003). In contrast with Valerie, the young woman character, Bella, who has no children portrays motherly attributes as she strives to raise he brother's children in a mannerly way. Moreover, Hurdo, Bella's mother shows her motherly commitment as she wishes to liberate her daughter from oppressive cultural mores.

On the same note, Forna's *Ancestor Stones* depicts the issue of motherhood broadly. Educated women characters such as Mariama and Serah recognize motherhood as their identity. They argue that their grandmothers and mothers have shaped their present identities. Mariama's mother and Serah's mother are strong characters who have been struggling against patriarchal and colonial oppression. Thus, they consider their respective mothers as their true models from whom they inherit strength and courage that enable them to pass hardships that they encounter in life. Besides, *Ancestor Stone* represents African mothers as nurturers of the African environment and people.

Concurrently, *Season of Crimson Blossoms* provides the place of motherhood in Northern Nigerian Hausa society. Even a male character, Fa'iza's father, Mu'azu Aminu, understands the value of the mother in children's life. He pays special attention to Fa'iza because she look likes his mother. In addition, Munkaila endeavors to please his mother, Binta offering unreserved care, and he sacrifices his life striving to save his mother's honor. Nonetheless, as Farah in *Hiding in Plain Sight* reveals through Valerie, and Makumbi's *Kintu* through Faisi, Ibrahim stresses that mothers should be as close as to their children and show selfless commitment to them. Reza develops a negative attitude towards his mother, Maimuna for she has left him since his infancy.

In the same way, *Coconut* presents the issue of motherhood through Ofilwe's mother, Gemina. As Farah's protagonist, Bella endeavors to bring up her deceased brother's children in the way that they acquire good manners, Gemina shows commitment to her children as she forces Ofilwe to obey African cultural values. For instance, she corrects Ofilwe when she uses informal "Hi" while greeting her mother's friends. In South African indigenous cultures, such kind of greeting for elders is considered as disrespect. Again, as Farah's Hurdo does, Matlwa's Gemina wants her children to be free from father's influence while choosing their interest. When her husband, John compels their son Tshepo to study a subject out of his interest, Gemina challenges him by supporting Tshepo's idea.

The Hairdresser of Harare also exhibits the theme of motherhood. Unlike Farah's Valerie and Makumbi's Faisi, Huchu's protagonist, Vimbai is represented as committed mother who owns many positive attributes that African feminism demands from African mothers. Vimbai has only one daughter Chiwoniso, to whom she endeavors to create a bright future despite being a single mother. Vimbai gets Chiwoniso from the wrong relationship that she makes with Fillip, but she considers her daughter as a gift, not as a burden. Indeed, Vimbai considers her little girl as one who gives hope in her life. This underscores the African feminists' argument that motherhood is a natural gift that women enjoy life since they possess the much valued asset, children (Alkali et al., 2013). In addition, Minister M_'s devotion to maintain kinship solidarity reflects that African motherhood is not restricted to a woman's biological role (childbearing) and nurturing her child, rather she nurtures her kin, relatives and her community.

Likewise, in *Minaret*, motherhood is one of the notable themes. Similar to the West African novelist, Forna's female characters such as Mariama and Serah, Aboulela's female protagonist, Najwa considers her mother Mania as her prototype model. Mania is portrayed as a selfless mother who sacrifices her life for the betterment of her children. Inheriting such characteristics from Mania, Najwa wants to pay sisterly sacrifice to her twin Omar who is jailed in Britain when she refuses to go Canada upon her mother's death. Comparably, the Egyptian novel, *The Yacoubian Building*, deals with the theme of motherhood. Similar to the East African novelists Farah and Makumbi, the North African novelist Aswany depicts two types of mothers. As Farah's protagonist Bella and Makumbi's Magda, Aswany's Busayna shows her commitment to family when she sells her body to support her sisters and mothers. Likewise, another character Souad is

also engaged in miserable sexual relationship with a rich man, Azzam in order to make her child's future better. On the other hand, women characters such as Busayna's mother, Dawlat and Hatim's mother are presented as careless and selfish in contrast with the notion of African motherhood. Busayna's mother forces her daughter to sell her body and support the family while Hatim's mother refuses to render motherly care to her child. In contrast to Busayna, Dawlat attacks her only brother, Zaki Bey to clutch his properties.

8.1.4 Negotiation and Cooperation

All the eight novels under inquiry strengthen African feminists' concern for maintaining cooperative relationships between men and women. For instance, Makumbi's *Kintu* underlines the significance of men in women's life. Female characters such as Mazzi and Zaya, who say no to patriarchal oppression, value men's role in their life as both enjoy heterosexual affairs. Through characterization of Zaya and Mazzi, Makumbi maintains African feminists' call for negotiation between men and women to create equal platforms where both get mutual benefits. In addition, the educated male characters such as Miisi and Isaac view their wives as their complementarities without whom they can never be complete persons. In like manner, in *Hiding in Plain Sight*, Farah shows the need to establish mutually beneficial relationships through Aar and Bella. Aar's unconditional love and support towards his sister, Bella compels her to handle the responsibility of mothering his two children in his absence. Mutually cooperative relationships between Aar and Bella, beyond underlining sister-brother relationship, upholds that men and female should get together in order to escape multiple oppressions of post-colonial African societies. Hence, the novel agrees with the African feminist notion that encourages fighting against all-rounded oppression of a society so as to bring a sustainable freedom for women rather than focusing on sexist suppression (see Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994; Ogunyemi, 1985).

Moreover, Forna (2006) in *Ancestor Stones* depicts men to women relationships as all the female characters are engaged in a heterosexual marriage despite the fact that some characters such as Asana, Hawa and Serah latter prefer independent lives because of resistance to oppression. Asana and Hawa even initially prefer polygamous husbands in order to minimize household burdens instead of totally ignoring marriage. Equally, Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms* underpins the idea of men to women cooperation. Almost all women characters of the novel recognize the importance of men in their lives while struggling against patriarchal oppression. For example, one

of the female characters, Hureira seems to be intolerant to oppression as she repeatedly divorces. However, she clearly understands the value of man as she becomes disappointed by her divorce with her first husband and again as she marries the second husband. Besides, Hadiza, another young female character values the importance of man in woman's life when she advises her mother, Binta to get married. Binta's sexual satisfaction with the young man, Reza, compels her to maintain the prohibited sexual relationship by rejecting the society's criticism. This strengthens how men are important to women's lives.

Furthermore, *Coconut* reveals men to women cooperation through brother-sister relationship between Ofilwe and Tshepo. Ofilwe's disillusionment with racial discrimination is because of the consistent advice of her brother, Tshepo who has been suspicious about the superiority of the Western culture over black culture. Tshepo's skeptical view of Christianity and his timely perception of the continuation of the colonial racial segregation of black people despite their class influences Ofilwe to think of her original identity. Thus, she begins questing about the pre-colonial religion of her people. She also starts to learn the vocabulary of her indigenous language. This indicates that, Ofilwe becomes conscious that she must respect her own people and culture because of the assistance offered by her brother, Tshepo. This reinforces Ogunyemi (1985)'s call for eliminating racial oppression through cooperation between men and women. What is more, *The Hairdresser of Harare* maintains establishing cooperative relationships between men and women in order to bring social transformation where women and men enjoy equal rights. For example, one of the male characters, Robert, helps his sister to own a house by deconstructing the patriarchal convention that grants the heirloom rights for men only.

Concerning *Minaret*, the female character Mania, Najwa's mother, marries Najwa's father who is below her class to fill her incompleteness because of her first husband's abandonment. Similarly, another woman character, Dr. Zeinab argues that in order to sustain complementary relationship between a husband and a wife, there need to be a culture of tolerance and negotiation. Thus, similar with the West African novelist Ibrahim's protagonist, Binta who blames her rebellious daughter, Hureira for being intolerant to her husband, Dr. Zeinab criticizes her daughter, Lamya for lacking such traits while dealing with her husband. When we see *The Yacoubian Building*, one of the male characters, Zaki Bey feels incomplete because of his unmarried status. In order to fill

this gap he marries Busayna at his old age. Similarly, Busayna's miserable single life has changed in to joy due to Zaki Bey's love and care.

8.1.5 Women and Decolonization

Another commonly discussed theme in the novels under investigation is decolonizing African women's image and their cultures that had been negatively represented in colonial and Western feminist discourses. For example, Makumbi (2014) in *Kintu* stresses the need for preserving traditional culture of the Ganda people. The novel predominantly deals with the pre-colonial cultural history of the Ganda society by integrating with the post-colonial Ugandan context from women's perspectives. In *Kintu,* there are two types of women characters in relation to cultural identity. Magda strives to reserve the pre-colonial tradition of kinship connections. In contrast, Faisi embraces Western culture under the mask of Christianity, so her characterization ironically calls for restoring the traditional cultural identity. In *Kintu,* Christianity is depicted as a threat to indigenous beliefs and traditions of Uganda. The female character, Magda is suspicious about Christianity, and she considers it as a tool for maintaining colonial power by distracting indigenous belief systems and cultural traditions of the Ugandan people. Furthermore, Ruth shows her suspicion of Christianity as she feels ashamed when her mother, Faisi and father, Kanani create false discourses in preaching people to accept the religion.

Likewise, the female protagonist of the *Hiding in Plain Sight,* Bella loves and respects non-repressive Somali culture in particular and African traditions in general. Bella has been prudent when she talks about her identity. Even though she has an Italian blood from her father's part, she confidently expresses herself as a Somali or an African woman. However, women characters such as Valerie and Padmini do not obey African cultural values as they are deeply immersed in Western culture. Moreover, Farah exposes the problems of women owing to an Islamic fundamentalist political group called Alshabab in Somalia. Hence, Farah shows how the Somali people in general and women in particular have been suffering from this extremist Islamic political group. In addition to leading Bella and her family to an agonizing life in exile, the Alshabaab group murders Bella's beloved brother Aar. Hence, Bella and her mother, Hurdo, have been forced to be separated from their homeland. Bella's stepfather, Digaaleh, forces Bella to stop the modeling profession that she highly adores, but supported by Hurdo, Bella resists such religious suppression.

Forna (2006) also reveals that women take great responsibility in maintaining indigenous cultural identity. The whole story of *Ancestor Stones* centers around telling indigenous cultural traditions of Sierra Leone to new generations, and all the narrators are women. This implies that post-colonial African women writers like Forna strive to restore their lost pre-colonial cultural identity. Women characters, Mariama and Serah stand against the Western culture that diminished African indigenous cultural identity. Moreover, these women characters endeavor to correct the distorted history of Africa. Mariama argues that both Christianity and Islam are non-African religions and are imported from abroad. She contends that these un-African religions are responsible for destroying her mother's and grandmother's spirit. For instance, the Islamic religious leaders in the novel convince the indigenous people who accept the religion to ignore their ancestral spiritual practices and traditions considering them as *haram* while the Christian preachers consider the indigenous Sierra Leonean people who practice their ancestral beliefs and spirits as *pagans.* Equally, in *Season of Crimson Blossoms,* Ibrahim (2016) reveals the consequence of imported religious based violence on the lives of Northern Nigerian women. This religious motivated hatred between Christians and Muslims causes Binta and her sister, Asab, to lose their respective husbands. Hence, Ibrahim depicts both Christianity and Islam as problematic to women. Besides, female characters such as Fa'iza, Kareema, Hadiza and Hureira deconstruct the Islamic rules for they disobey such suppressive traditions and want to transform them.

Furthermore, the Southern African novelists, Huchu and Matlwa, portray issues of respecting and preserving non- hurtful indigenous cultural traditions in their respective novels. To begin with, in *Coconut,* although Ofilwe initially seems to be in identity crisis, she later strives to restore the traditional pre-colonial cultural values. She is disillusioned that Christianity is an import from Europe, and its false discourses aim to convince the colonized people to avoid their indigenous spiritual traditions. Hence, Ofilwe wants to restore the indigenous African traditional beliefs, but Fikile totally hates black culture and black people, as she highly adores the white culture. Analogously, in *The Hairdresser of Harare,* women characters such as Vimbai, Mrs. Kumalo, Michelle and The Minister M_ are respectful towards Zimbabwe's indigenous cultural values while struggling against women oppressive traditions. The Minister M_ and young Michelle strive to maintain kinship ties, which is one of the cultural values of African people. Vimbai also sadly states how post-colonial Zimbabwean black women are suffering from identity crisis. None of her black client wants to be black beautiful or other colored colonized women. This indicates that the

colonial legacy is still dominant in the post-colonial context of Zimbabwe. Although Vimbai is from Christian background, she thinks that Christianity is the colonial import to Africa and serves as a systematic maintenance of Western traditions at the expense of indigenous African traditions.

On the same note, in *Minerat*, characters such as Lamya, Najwa's parents and Randa and her parents are criticized for loving Western culture and life style. Nonetheless, this criticism is not from African or Sudanese cultural perspective; rather it is from the Islamic viewpoint. Aboulela (2005) embraces Islam as a real manifestation of Sudanese women's culture and identity. In the novel, female characters such as Lamya and Randa who do not respect Islamic doctrines are depicted negatively as arrogant, ill-mannered and impolite while Najwa and Shahinaz who truly obey Islamic doctrines are portrayed positively. Particularly, the protagonist, Najwa embraces Islamic culture as her identity and calls herself Muslim rather than Sudanese or African.

On the other hand, *The Yacoubian Building* depicts Islamic religion as oppressive to women. For instance, the female character, Souad is the victim of Islamic teaching as the religious leader, Sheikh El Samman forces her to abort in order to please her wrong husband Hagg Azzam. Besides, *The Yacoubian Building* portrays the French woman, Jeanette who is married to Egyptian man, Dr. Rasheed, as an incompetent mother. Jeanette lacks quality of motherhood so that she does not show love and care to her only son, Hatim, and this leads Hatim to lead a miserable life as he has been engaged in homosexual relationship since his childhood because of his Western minded parents' negligence. Jeanette has a negative attitude towards Egyptian culture and people.

8.1.6 Portrayal of Homosexuality

Betelhem (2010) states that in many African contexts, same-sex partnership has been considered as illegal and immoral act. Even though post-colonial African countries such as South Africa, Côte d'Ivoire and Burundi have legalized homosexuality in their respective constitutions, in 38 African countries, homosexuality is illegal and an indictable crime and in some countries, it can bear death penalty with proclamations of the un-Africanness of homosexuality. *Hiding in Plain Sight*, *The Hairdresser of Harare* and *The Yacoubian Building* depict the difficulties of same-sex relationships in African contexts. In *Hiding in Plain Sight*, the Somali novelist, Nuruddin Farah shows that the two East African countries, Kenya and Uganda have been uncomfortable for people engaged in same-sex partnerships. In this novel, two lesbian women characters encounter

problems in Uganda, Kampala, for their homosexual activities. Valerie has left her husband and two children, as she becomes lesbian with Padmini. Uganda is one of the African countries that legally banned homosexuality (Betelhem, 2010), so Valerie and Padmini, have been imprisoned in Kampala for the crime.

Correspondingly, Huchu's *The Hairdresser of Harare* depicts the impossibility of homosexuality in Harare, Zimbabwe. Dumisani suffers for being gay. Because of this, his parents have considered him a patient. In order to save Dumisani from such sinful and immoral practice, his father facilitates the deportation of his Canadian gay mate. Vimbai also fears and condemns same-sex relation for she sees it as immoral and sinful act. *The Yacoubian Building* also shows the strangeness of homosexuality in Egypt. Nevertheless, because the political leaders and security officers are corrupt, there are clubs that entertain such acts by bribing the leaders. In the novel, there is not even a single female character in a lesbian relationship, but male characters such as Hatim and Abduh are homosexuals although Abduh is regrets being gay because of poverty. Because of gayness, Hatim has been offended and segregated by the society in which he lives.

8.2 Differences among the Novels

All the selected male novelists are concerned with contemporary issues of women in their respective countries, whereas, some of the women novelists are devoted to tell women's stories beginning from the pre-colonial to the post-colonial post- second Millennium periods of Africa. In this respect, the East African novel, *Kintu* and the West African *Ancestor Stones* expose and challenge women oppressive thought and practices chronologically by creating pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial women characters. These novelists attempt to write back to the colonial distortion of African women's image and African cultural history in general. In this regard, Ezeaku (2014) contends that in the struggle to correct the image of women as presented by colonialism and Western feminism, African women writers of literature usually try to create women of out-standing qualities and with a sense of fulfillment. In creating virtuous female characters, the writers move away from traditional idiosyncrasies to create women characters that flaunt the traditional beliefs and succeed in the African feminist spirit. In this respect, Makumbi and Forna draw different ways of representing African women and their respective societies as they attempt to correct the wrong depiction of African women and their indigenous cultures in colonial discourses and Western feminism.

However, the South African novel, *Coconut* emphasizes the racial and identity issues of women in the post-apartheid South African context, and the Sudanese novelist, Aboulela, in *Minaret* focuses on post-colonial Sudanese snugs. Again, unlike *Kintu* and *Ancestor Stones*, *Coconut* and *Minaret* do not deal with issues of polygamy. Despite the fact that one of the female protagonists of the *Coconut,* Ofilwe quests to know about her ancestor's spirit and religion, issues related with preserving indigenous traditions have been given less attention in both novels. Besides, *Minaret* portrays Islam as the traditional religion of Sudan and calls for preserving Islamic values through her protagonist, Najwa but says nothing about African indigenous traditions except in recognizing motherhood and cooperation between men and women. Nevertheless, *Kintu* and *Ancestor Stones* broadly discuss matters concerning restoring indigenous traditions and spirits.

In contrast to Makumbi and Forna, even though all the four male-authored novels expose the negative effects of Christianity and Islam on the indigenous traditions of Africa, they focus on narrating post-colonial or contemporary matters of women in their respective countries and societies. Again, while *Season of Crimson Blossoms* deals with the negative impact of polygamy on women, the three male authors do not raise the issue. What is more, while the male-authored novels such as *Hiding in Plain Sight*, *The Hairdresser of Harare* and *The Yacoubian Building* deal with homosexuality, none of the female-authored novels deals with this issue, except Makimbi even though her depiction is not explicit whether to support same-sex practice or to condemn.

Makumbi's *Kintu* gives few clues regarding the pre-colonial Buganda Kingdom's tolerance of sexual preference describing how the kings refuse to give attention to Ssentalo's (who is brilliant war general) undiscriminating sexual propensities. However, we can learn from the novel that Ssentalo has married to a woman and has many children. Another clue is given in *Kintu* when Western-educated male character, Miisi, wants to write an article about sexuality to clarify the long held view that homosexuality is un-African and brought to Uganda by Westerners. Nonetheless, his intention does not seem to support same-sex practice in post-colonial Uganda.

Chapter Nine: Conclusion and Recommendations

An investigation of the selected African novels in English against comparative model of post-colonial literary criticism using African feminism as a theoretical framework shows that the selected authors (both male and female) deal with many issues of women in post-colonial contexts of their respective societies or nations. Thus, based on the critical analyses of the novels under enquiry, the following conclusions and recommendations are provided respectively.

9.1 Conclusion

Because literary discourses are one of the tools that maintain or fight against any form of oppression and teach societies to recognize women's positive image, contemporary African novels play important role to create cooperative relationship between men and women in order to dismiss women oppressive ideologies and practices. As far as African feminist literary criticism is concerned, feminist novels are not only written by women. Men novelists also play crucial roles as they represent positive images and experiences of African women in contrast to patriarchal and colonial/ neo-colonial marginalization as well they examine post-colonial snags of African countries that have impacts on the lives of post-independence African women and their respective societies (Arndt, 2002, Nnaemeka, 2003; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994; Stratton, 1994). Similarly, one of the notable African feminists, Ogunyemi (1985) states that African feminist novels are directed to both men and women in the form of remonstrating against the patriarchal power structures, colonial or neo-colonial related subjugations, socio-economic class based poverty and the post-colonial impediments of development.

In line with those assumptions, the selected contemporary Anglophone African novels in this research such as *Kintu*, *Ancestor Stones*, *Coconut* and *Minaret* (authored by women), and *Hiding in Plain Sight*, *Season of Crimson Blossoms*, *The Hairdresser of Harare*, and *The Yacoubian Building*, (authored by men) are categorized as African feminist novels. This is because they deal with issues of African women in line with the theoretical framework of African feminism. Passing horizons of Western white feminist discourses that focus on sexism, the novels under investigation examine and uncover African women's problems related with economic, social, political, religious, racial and historical suppressions along with patriarchal oppression demanding timely

actions that require systematic approaches to desiccate the base roots of women's oppression and to achieve socio-cultural, economic and political transformation.

Even though the main concern of each novel varies from one theme to the other, all expose and challenge patriarchal oppressions and post-colonial development problems of African nations that strengthen African women's burden. In *Kintu*, Makumbi has created feminist women characters in both pre-colonial and post-colonial settings. The pre-colonial female characters (Zaya, Mazzi and Nnassolo) and the post-colonial characters (General Kusi, Nnamata and Magda) are progressive female characters in *Kintu* although there are also some submissive women characters in the novel. Some educated male characters, for example, Miisi and Isaac are feminist because they positively recognize women's role and potential and consider their respective wife as their complementary parts. In *Hiding in Plain Sight*, Farah also depicts female characters such as Hurdo and Bella as very diligent and self-reliant women whose worldview and struggle against multiple-rooted oppressions entirely based on African cultures and African philosophies. Male characters like Aar also show cooperation to fight against women's suppression. However, women characters such as Valerie and Padmini are represented as out of African culture for their ideology and practices are entirely Western although they are not originally from Europe or America.

As well, in Forna's *Ancestor Stones*, all the main characters are women, and many of these characters, (such as Asana, Abie, Saffie, Hawa, Mariama, and Serah) except few (like Ya Namina who has patriarchal mind) portray many qualities that African feminism expects from African women. These women characters challenge multi-dimensional suppressions of women mostly result from patriarchal ideology and post-colonial failure. In *Season of Crimson Blossoms*, Ibrahim has also created a central female character, Binta who has challenged the conservative Hausa patriarchal culture being engaged in the forbidden sexual relation with much younger boy Hassan (Reza). Young women characters of the novel such as Faiza, Hureira and Hadiza also bravely attack the patriarchal practices and thoughts that pullback women from enjoying life and freedom. However, the novel ends with the death of Binta's only son while he is trying to restore his mother's lost social dignity, and this may entail that Binta does not win her society.

On the other hand, the South African female novelist, Matlwa, in *Coconut*, exposes and resists patriarchal ideology through the female character, Gemina who bravely challenges her husband who seeks to decide on family matters alone even though the novel centers on the controversy of

identity issues and racial discriminations in post-apartheid South Africa. Again, through Fikile, Matlwa unveils how post-apartheid South African Black women and ordinary people suffer from poverty. Even though Fikile lacks many qualities of African women as she hates blackness, she has an optimistic view of future and thinks that she will solve her problems by hard work. In contrast, Ofilwe affected by racial discrimination, has solved her identity problem and begins to embrace indigenous African traditions, and thus exhibits some attributes of African feminism.

In Zimbabwe's *The Hairdresser of Harare*, Huchu also develops progressive and optimistic women characters such as the protagonist, Vimbai, The Minister_ and Mrs. Kumalo who deconstructs the patriarchal and colonial assumptions of African women by playing prominent roles such as leadership and entrepreneurship. In addition, Huchu's male character, Dumisani's involvement in the profession of hairdressing, which had/has been women's role implies the resumption of destabilizing traditional gender roles in contemporary culture of Zimbabwe. The protagonist of the novel, Vimbai, critically attacks the post-colonial government for failing to bring development, security, justice and good governance to the nation so that many ordinary people, particularly women and children suffer much from problems that emanate from the failure of the development in the nation.

In the same manner, the Central and North African novels: *Minaret* (2005) and *The Yacoubian Building* (2004) deal with many injustices of patriarchy and post-colonial mal-governance of Sudan and Egypt respectively. In *Minaret*, the female protagonist, Najwa along with her mother and brother exiles to London and comes across many problems due to continuous military coups in Sudan. Correspondingly, in Aswany's *The Yacoubian Building*, one of the main characters, Busayna becomes a sex object in post-colonial Egypt although she acquires a good profession. When Aboulela's protagonist, Najwa departs her boyfriend Anwar who always subjugates her womanhood, her main reason to reach this decision is not his patriarchal thought but rather his negligence of Islam. Similarly, despite the fact that Aswany's female character, Souad resists her husband Azzam, she is latter forced to commit abortion and terminate the marriage contract without her consent because of the absence of justice in post-colonial Egypt as wealthy men buy justice by money.

All the more, all novels have celebrated the African feminist notion of motherhood in various ways. While *Kintu* takes the concept as an expression of a woman's ability to handle the task of

nurturing and maintaining kinship harmony, *Hiding in Plain Sight* represents motherhood as center of moral values in which a mother is expected to teach what is right or what is wrong to her children as well as to her kinship. In the same way, *Ancestor Stones* depicts motherhood as a mode of resistance to oppression and nurturer of environment in the tradition of Sierra Leonean women, and it has been transferring from generation to generation so that even educated women take their mothers as role models who practically teach them how to resist suppressive thoughts and practices. Likewise, *Coconut*, *The Hairdresser of Harare* and *Minaret* associate motherhood with protection and endless love. On the other hand, *Season of Crimson Blossoms* demonstrates the notion of motherhood as a rewarding task in which a woman enjoys love and extraordinary treatment from her children, but it can be curse when she fails to exhibit the expected moral and social values. Whereas, *The Yacoubian Building* by identifying good motherhood from bad ones describes it as limitless sacrifice that a mother owes to her children as well to her siblings.

Furthermore, all the studied novels maintain the significance of restoring non-oppressive indigenous cultural traditions and identities and reinforce the idea of establishing cooperative and complementary relationships between women and men, negotiation, tolerance, and family-centered struggle to bring full transformation.

What is more, most of the examined novels strive to decolonize the wrong depiction of African women and their cultures by colonizers or neo-colonizers as well as by Western feminists. Both male and female authors (except the Sudanese Aboulela who embraces Islam) have condemned Christianity and Islam. While *Kintu* resists Christianity through the female character Magda, in *Hiding in Plain Sight* women characters, Hurdo and Bella, reject the Islamic doctrine that obliges women/girls to submit their wills to husbands or fathers. On the other hand, *Ancestor Stones* and *Season of Crimson Blossoms* blame both Christianity and Islam for strengthening women's burdens although Ibrahim gives much less concern to Christianity than Forna who equally condemns both religions for distracting traditional African cultures and faiths.

Again, *Coconut* and *The Hairdresser of Harare* portray their female characters' (Ofilwe's and Vimbai's respectively) disillusionment of how Christianity destructed indigenous belief systems and cultures of their respective nations. Particularly, in *Coconut* even though Ofilwe is formerly seen as victim of identity crisis, her later disillusionment symbolizes post-colonial black women who practically understand the persistence of racial discrimination in post-apartheid South Africa.

In contrast, Fikile's symbolizes those post-apartheid South African women who remain mentally colonized. Likewise, in *The Hairdresser of Harare*, some minor black women characters (the clients of Mrs. Khumalo's salon) seems to be suffering from identity crisis as they wish their hair to be dressed in a way that makes them feel like a "white woman"

The Sudanese female novelist, Aboulela, in *Minaret* also positively embraces Islamic religion as the protagonist of the novel, Najwa and other female characters such as Shahinaz and Lamya identify themselves as Arab women than African. Besides, women characters such as Lamya who do not want to be loyal to Islamic principles are negatively portrayed as arrogant, selfish and disrespectful while those who submit themselves to Islamic rules are depicted as well-mannered, selfless and polite women. In contrast to Aboulela, the Egyptian male novelist, Aswany, in *The Yacoubian Building* criticizes Islam for underpinning women's suppression as the Sheikh who is the religious leader supports Azzam who suppresses his wife, Souad.

Concerning differences among the novels, the female novelists, particularly Makumbi and Forna rewrite the history of their grandmothers by setting their novels in pre-colonial and post-colonial contexts of their respective nation along with unveiling patriarchal and post-colonial impediment related suppression of women. On the other hand, all male novelists focus on depicting contemporary or post-colonial issues related with women's suppression that originate from patriarchy and post-colonial failure of development in their respective nations, and except the Nigerian Ibrahim, all male novelists deal with difficulty of practicing homosexuality in African setting. None of female novelists raises such issue although Makumbi touches the issue slightly.

9.2 Recommendations

Novel as a literary genre is one of the tools to fight against social tribulations in general and women's oppression in particular. In that way, most of the investigated novels in this dissertation are true ally of women's liberation as they examine issues of women in their respective countries in line with the arguments and visions of African feminism. Therefore, these novels are typical models for the future authors and literary critics of Africa who should give alike priority towards socio-cultural and economic transformation of the continent that in turn actually contribute to the long-lasting emancipation and empowerment of African women and their respective societies. Unless the whole society is liberated from the colony of poverty and establishes transformed

culture, women's struggle for freedom becomes null other than illusion. Hence, African literary authors should continue their brave commitment to uncover all social ills and failure of their governments without fear, and they should attain rewarding criticism.

This study is mainly concentrated on the analysis of contemporary African novels in English using African feminist theoretical framework. Although the considered novels are selected from five regions of Africa, they are very few (eight) as compared to the very significant number of contemporary English novels in the continent. Again, this research considered only Anglophone novels and therefore, contemporary African novels in other languages as well other genres of African literature remain unexplored in this context. Consequently, the present researcher recommends to future researchers who wish to conduct research on African literature in general and novels in particular to make thorough criticism comparatively by using post-colonial African feminist perspectives so as to contribute to African feminist literary criticism and to encourage literary scholars who strive to boost women's all-rounded freedom.

African feminist approach is mainly based on systematic negotiation and cooperation, which aims at dismantling women and ordinary peoples' oppressions in a polite and diplomatic way unlike the rebellious Western radical feminism. Hence, feminist critics around the world must adopt African feminist philosophies and methodologies in order to alleviate problems of women and their respective societies because African feminist approach is more effective than a radical approach as it systematically involves the oppressors in fighting against oppression.

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