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**Shifting the Canon: Women's Struggle in the Writings of Chinua
Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Nwapa's *Efuru***

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Declaration of Originality

I hereby declare that this submission is my work and that, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which has been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution.

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Dedication

I dedicate this humble work to my everloving parents who have always supported, encouraged and inspired me during this journey.

To my sisters for their encouragements, moral support and for being there for me all along.

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Abstract

The poor representation of women and especially black women has long governed the literary canon. Eventually, women stood up and took the pen in an attempt to narrate their own realities. Thus, this research work aims to discover the main differences between male-authored and female-authored novels. To this effect, the current study attempts to identify the different portrayals of men and women through the analysis of the characters. Moreover, it provides a comparison between the way female and male writers discuss similar concerns in divergent ways, and provides an overview of their writing styles. Through the use of the womanist literary theory, this dissertation focused on women issues in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Flora Nwapa's *Efuru*. This research will clarify the polarity between writers from opposite genders in creating literary works that include female characters and matters relating to them.

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General Introduction

General Introduction

Throughout history, women have always been subjected to discrimination and sexism from their male counterparts who believe in their superiority over them. They have been treated as mere objects and accessories for men and had a set of rules to follow in order to be accepted by society. Moreover, they were accustomed to having specific roles by being wives, mothers, and housekeepers. This treatment was more severe for colored women who were not included in the woman liberation movement.

This reality was mirrored in the literary works of male authors who emphasized the docility of women and their submissiveness to their masters. Particularly, the African authors who throughout their novels entirely neglected the existence and participation of women in society. Thus, this paved the way for African female authors to join the literary sphere and correct the misrepresentations provided by their male counterparts.

African post-colonial writers produced works that fixated on the powerful image of the African man and his ability in fighting the colonial forces. Contrastingly, the female authors focused on the issues and struggles they faced in the patriarchal society they lived in. These contrasting views are depicted in the novels of Chinua Achebe *Things Fall Apart* and Flora Nwapa *Efuru* who tackled comparable issues in different manners.

Consequently, the central aim of the current research work is to explore gender differences and inequality during the postcolonial period in Africa. It also tends to examine the representation of male and female characters in the mentioned novels. Finally, it attempts to investigate the distinguishing characteristics that make the works dissimilar.

Achebe and Nwapa discussed several issues related to women in their novels, starting from marriage and independence to the status of African women in society. Therefore, the central

problem of the present work lies in the ability of these authors to present the same subjects in thoroughly opposed fashions.

In this regard, the study will address the following research questions:

- To what extent does the gender of the authors influence their writing and representation of female issues in postcolonial Africa?
- In what way does Nwapa in *Efuru* change the stereotypical image of the oppressed African women as presented in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*?
- How does Achebe and Nwapa discuss women's concerns in an utterly different way from one another?

In this vein, the aforementioned research questions are hypothesized as follow:

- The gender of the authors exceedingly influenced their depiction of women's concerns in postcolonial African literature. Hence, male authors focused on portraying the power of the African man while completely ignoring the female presence. Whereas, female authors aimed at correcting any misrepresentation by men.
- Flora Nwapa changed the stereotypical image of the African woman by creating powerful, resilient and independent characters in contrast to the weak and submissive ones provided by Achebe and his male counterparts.
- Achebe and Nwapa explored similar issues in contradictory ways through the use of different writing styles.

A qualitative research method has been adopted in order to achieve the objective of the study and in an attempt to answer the former questions and test the accuracy of the hypothesis. Hence, the sources used to collect data in this research work are books, articles, journals and internet materials.

This dissertation consists of three chapters. The first chapter will provide an overview of the history of feminism and womanism and will introduce a theoretical framework of the womanist theory. Furthermore, the second chapter will deal with the main differences between male and female authors in literature. Whereas, the last chapter will conduct a comparative study of the novels mentioned above, through a womanist approach.

Chapter One:
A Clash of Interests
between
Feminism and
Womanism(s)

1.1 Introduction

Feminism as a movement came to free women from the harshness they endured due to sexism; however, in the process, it neglected women of color who experienced more drastic and rough experiences. As a result, women of color created a movement that would assemble all women regardless of their race. This chapter aims to shed light on the negligence that women of color and especially black women suffered during the feminist movement. Moreover, it presents an overview of the emergence of a movement and a theory that entirely focused on black women and the obtainment of their rights.

1.2 White Privilege and Early Feminism

First-wave feminism was a movement that belonged narrowly to the bourgeoisie. It was not an inclusive women's rights movement, but a movement of the white, middle class, heterosexual women who wanted social equality with men in their class. The women that led the suffragist movement in the U.S aimed at gaining a number of rights for women that would enable them to be viewed as equals to men. However, they grouped all women under one category in their fight.

Thus, these women failed to acknowledge the fact that their movement was based only on the problems of white and middle-class women. Besides, despite the political support for feminist goals of equality of work and wage by Black women activists, such as Maria Stewart, Sojourner Truth, and Frances E. Harper, who fought for the rights of women of color, they were not accepted and all their efforts went in vain.

Feminism was based on the notion of sisterhood that only included white, middle class women and rendered their experiences as a universal representation of all women's experiences. Thus, women of color lost their sense of belonging to the movement since it

failed to take into consideration the issue of racism and classism that hugely affected the lives of women of color.

Bell Hooks, a black African-American feminist, in her essay, "Sisterhood: Political Solidarity between Women", disagreed with the universal concept of sisterhood among all women. She emphasized the dissimilarity between the experiences of white women and women of color and argued that: "The idea of 'common oppression' was a false and corrupt platform disguising and mystifying the true nature of women's varied and complex social reality" (127).

While white feminists were concerned with equality and claiming rights such as legal personhood, the right to vote and to own property; women of color were still claiming their basic rights of being acknowledged as women. White Feminists have viewed gender as central to their identity, whereas black Feminists have many identity issues beyond gender including their race and class which are overlooked by those with different experiences. In a patriarchal society where men ruled, Black women were discriminated not only for being black but also for being black and women and they were excluded from all the movements that were made to grant their rights.

In the feminist movement, the central focus of white women was creating a strong bond between a group of women who they believed belonged to the same category as them. Furthermore, they believed that underrating and downgrading women of color and excluding them outside of their group would strengthen their ties. Thus, these women became the oppressors and subjugators themselves, as stated by Cherrie Moraga in "A Long Line of Vendidas: Chicanas and Feminism": "For, if race and class suffer the woman of color as much as her sexual identity, then the Radical Feminist must extend her own "identity" politics to include her "identity" as oppressor as well" (52).

This explains the fact that as long as the suffrage movement reached its goal of granting white women the right to vote in 1920, it stopped fighting for that cause. Hence, they cast out black women and did not care if they were prevented from voting until the Voting Rights Act in 1965.

In the second wave of Feminism the same category of women continued to govern the narrative on the objectives, tactics, and ideologies of the movement. In her book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) Betty Friedan explained that those women wanted more than being wives and housekeepers (27). According to her, this *more* that these women thrived for was the right to work and to participate in life outside of the household. However, she failed to represent the needs of non-white women who did not possess the free time or the money to reach the high standards that the feminine mystique drew for women.

The image that Friedan created about feminism contributed to freeing and liberating white middle and upper class women and disregarded poor colored women. In response, Bell Hooks argued in her book *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* that Friedan overlooked the presence of minority female groups who were poor and colored, and she stated that these women would be summoned to take care of the homes and children of white women who would work alongside white men (1-2).

Racism was not taken as a fundamental problem for feminists; consequently, women of color started to look for a movement that combined both sexism and racism into a single entity. Feminism focused on its second wave on advocating for women's rights to work outside the home without taking into consideration that a woman of color had several issues to deal with in addition to the injustices she faced due to her gender, and that many black women already worked both outside and inside the household to maintain their families. As explained by Steady:

Regardless of one's position, the implications of the feminist movement for the black women are complex...Several factors set the black woman apart as having a different order of priorities. She is oppressed not simply because of her sex but ostensibly because of her race and, for the majority, essentially because of their class. Women belong to different socio-economic groups and do not represent a universal category. Because the majority of black women are poor, there is likely to be some alienation from the middle-class aspect of the women's movement which perceives feminism as an attack on men rather than on a system which thrives on inequality. (23-24)

Feminism and the feminist movement placed all women under one category which only described and cared for the struggles of white women. However, women do not share the same history neither similar consequences. Therefore, the attempt to place them under a single history is racist, and this fact led women of color to create a separate movement that focused mainly on the issues that affected them and placed them as the main characters of their destiny.

1.3. Toward a Black Feminist Movement

Since the beginning of the 19th century, it was obvious that there were two separate women's movements since white women refused to support the struggle of black women for their rights. Therefore, racism and sexism were the main factors behind the creation of the black women's movement.

As a result, since black women were discriminated against on various levels first due to their gender, then because of their race and social status, they were hugely disappointed with the unfair treatment they endured within the feminist movement. Therefore, they decided to create their own movement which focused mainly on them and their value as black women. A

movement that would gather all their issues in one place. Thereby, they aimed to incorporate black women and poor women in a movement of their own.

The participation of Black women in the Feminist movement started at an early stage, they wanted to be involved in the movement in order to gain their rights regardless of the white façade that it represented. In 1858 Sojourner Truth's reply to a man who doubted her sex by saying " Ain't I a woman " was used to further the women's cause and show the extent of their oppression in the male society. However, despite their contributions Black women were cast away from white feminist presentations and were forbidden from taking part in public speeches. Thus, they were left on the sidelines.

During the 19th and 20th centuries, Black women were excluded from the feminist movement and the civil rights organizations despite their various contributions. For example, they were not allowed to attend national conventions nor to march alongside white women during their manifestations. In addition, *History of Woman Suffrage* (1881), an outstanding book about the feminist movement and its events failed to mention the existence and participation of African-American women in the movement and disregarded their role in acquiring several rights for the majority of women.

Since the experience of being a woman of color was considerably different from the experiences and needs of the white feminists, various terms were coined to celebrate the plurality of women's experiences from different racial and ethnic expressions. On that account, several concepts that described the reality of African-American and African women were created such as the term Womanism, African womanism, and many more.

1.4 Black Women, Womanism and African Womanism(s)

Outstanding African-American and African writers and scholars emphasized the need to have a separate movement that would omit racism from the feminist movement and concentrate on their shared experiences of oppression and the tools they would use to overcome it.

To that end, Womanism as a movement was considered as a substitute to Feminism that included racism, classism, and gender issues. It addressed the restrictiveness and the limitations that feminism placed on women of color, and provided Black women with a heard voice. It gave value and importance to the lives of Black women and disagreed with the feminist ideology that put Black women at odds with their male counterparts.

The African-American novelist Alice Walker coined the term *Womanism* in order to offer Black women in America and Africa a space to formulate their policy, a space where race is powerless and unimportant. Later on, Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi followed her and developed the term into *African womanism* in order to focus on African women not only those who live in America but those who are a part of the African experience. Then, Clenora Hudson-Weems introduced the term *Africana Womanism* in order to highlight the issues of all women of African descent. In addition, other terms were presented such as Ogundipe-Leslie's *Stiwanism* and Achonolu's *Motherism* which advocate for African women's rights while maintaining the traditional and cultural traits of the African society.

1.4.1 Womanism

Alice Walker introduced Womanism as a concept that identifies with the struggle of Black women with patriarchy, sexism, and racism from both genders. As an African-American herself she knows the unfairness that her female counterparts have to deal with. As a

consequence, she created the term to empower the Black woman and emphasize her value in the Black community both in and outside of America.

The central idea on which Womanism is built is based on Walker's belief in the triple discrimination that Black women face from white men, white women and additionally black men. This victimization and disadvantage that they endure make them quite different from white women whose only fight is with the patriarchal system.

Walker attributes the term Womanism to Black Feminism since it represents and is shaped by the experiences of black women in relation to their culture. She defines and describes a Womanist at the beginning of her book *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* as a colored or Black girl who acts in a womanish way i.e. serious and responsible, who loves every aspect of other women's characters and culture, who considers men as her allies and is in love with life (11-12).

The thing that distinguishes Womanism from Feminism is not only the integration of Black women and granting them the primary focus and positions, but the fact that Womanism did not support the anti-man ideology that Feminism highlighted. Instead, it advocated partnership and mutual support and respect between the Black men and women and believed in their unity. However, it did not accept their superiority over them in the political and social life and challenged in a certain way "the unquestioned dominance of black men in those formations" (Brewer 98).

Moreover, it provides a representation of Black women within their environment and lays out their struggles without criticizing their culture. As a matter of fact, Womanism accepts and embodies the African culture and the principles of Black people. Thus, it incorporates the values and norms of the African society mainly those that do not oppress women.

It supports the incorporation of gendered people from different races instead of ostracizing them. As a result, its ideologies of pluralism and integration turned it into a movement that gathered not only black women but women from different ethnicities and minor groups. Moreover, Walker's Womanism accepts the notion of homosexuality and considers heterosexual marriage as a part of women's freedom of choice.

The main aim behind Womanism was to resolve gender issues without having to go against their male counterparts. The creation of strong bonds between the genders was one of its objectives. Nevertheless, many believed that it was focused on African-American women's experiences and did not fully concentrate on African culture and women's experiences in Africa. Furthermore, it was not fully embraced by African women at the time since they did not support the homosexual movement.

1.4.2 Africana Womanism

Clenora Hudson-Weems, another African scholar, coined the term Africana Womanism and proposed it as an ideology that could be applied to all women of African lineage. Therefore, she integrated into it the aspects of the African cultural identities and origins which can only be found in people of African descent.

Africana Womanism emphasizes the resilience of the African woman who unlike the white woman had no special rights or advantages, and had to overcome the struggles, constraints, and the antagonistic powers in her life solely through the powerful will of the Africana woman. In her book *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves* (1995) she conceives Africana womanism as "an ideology created and designed for all women of African descent. It is grounded in African culture, and therefore, it necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs, and desires of Africana women."(24).

Hudson argues that African women have explicit problems which eliminate them from being grouped with white middle-class women. Besides, she stresses the fact that African women give an enormous value to the notion of motherhood, and that they are hugely invested in their families and their relationships with men, especially their husbands.

However, her Africana Womanism focuses more on the oppression African women suffer from due to racism and classism, and on the conflict between the conformist feminists and the Black and African womanists. Thus, she fails to highlight the role of patriarchy in such oppression. For this reason, her concept is mainly recognized and accepted among the diasporic African women and African-American women who lean towards the acquisition of other rights before equality rights.

1.4.3 African Womanism

Although Walker and Hudson-Weems conceptualized their ideologies with all black women or women of African descent in mind, African feminists preferred to find distinctive self-naming concepts for themselves that fit the African origin and socio-cultural background in particular.

Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi separates herself from both Feminism and Womanism by creating a new term being African Womanism, which centers around issues that are relevant for all Africans not only those living in America. According to Okonjo, African women living in Africa experience several difficulties such as poverty, abuse, and cultural rituals that are not necessarily present in the lives of African-American women.

Accordingly, Chikwenye presents her own interpretation of African Womanism in her article “Womanism: The Dynamics of the Contemporary Black Female Novel in English” (1958), where she explains that: “An African womanist will recognize that, along with her

consciousness of sexual issues, she must incorporate racial, cultural, national, economic and political considerations to her philosophy” (64).

African Womanism, therefore, rejects any relation with feminism in consideration of differences both in race and experience. Furthermore, it regards motherhood, wifeness, and family centeredness as indispensable parts of the African woman and accepts them as long as they are not used as means to oppress women.

Among the womanists and feminists in Africa, the concept of African Womanism is the most widely recognized form of feminist theory. It promotes mutual dependence between the sexes in a similar way to Walker's Womanism and Hudson's Africana Womanism. Thus, all concepts agree on the fact that men and women cannot exist in isolation, and that the quest for gender equality should not damage the relationship between them. Besides, African Womanism attempts to maintain the originality of the African traditions and the importance of the traditional roles that African women hold in society. Contrastingly, it only opposes previous concepts because they do not include the economic, social state, and reality of the African countries in their pursuit of gender equality.

1.4.4 Stiwanism

Ogundipe-Leslie came up with the acronym Stiwanism which signifies *Social Transformation in Africa Including Women*. She introduced it as a concept that aims to create harmony within society by allowing African women to share the same privileges as African men in the social and political domains.

By taking into consideration the societal and governmental developments that occurred in African countries after their colonization, Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) argues that: “Stiwa is about the inclusion of African women in the contemporary social and political transformation of Africa” (229-230). In other words, Stiwanism gives a suitable ground for women to share

their abilities and potential and participate in the development and transformation process of the continent.

To this end, stiwanists believe that the termination of African women's oppression would take place as soon as both genders would accept the positive role played by women in the transformation of Africa. Moreover, it highlights the importance of a congruous relationship between the males and females of the society and clarifies that men and women should be allies instead of enemies in their search for equality.

1.4.5 Motherism

Catherine Achonolu created the term *Motherism* and described it as an Afrocentric replacement of Feminism. African culture gives massive importance to motherhood and links it with attributes of life, nurture, and protection of both the family and the environment. In this regard, motherhood and a mother's love for her child are central keys to Motherism.

Moreover, in contrast to Western feminism, Motherism welcomes the participation of men and regards any person who adopts the principles of Motherism being "love, tolerance, service, mutual cooperation of the sexes" (3) as a Motherist. To put it in another way, Motherism is not limited to mothers and the feeling of love is not restricted for their children. In fact, it extends its ideals to cover the whole of society in order to create harmony and peace within it.

Nevertheless, her concept was not fully accepted and admired by African women. While motherhood is a big part of a woman's life it should not be the only thing that brings her value and recognition. Thus, Motherism failed to provide the African woman with the empowerment and support that she needed outside of her traditional roles.

1.5 Points of Agreement and Disagreement

Even though Feminism and Womanism both as movements and literary theories shared the same goals of fighting oppression, striving for equality, and changing the misrepresentation of women in society and literature, Black women still separated themselves from the feminist movement. This goes back to the fact that several divergences were created between them due to their cultural differences.

Feminism can be considered as an anti-man movement that rejects strongly any traditional roles attributed to women. Moreover, it sees issues of race and racism as separate from women's oppression thus it is excluded from the movement. Furthermore, they universalized their movement on the basis that women around the globe share the same experiences.

Alternatively, Womanism and African womanisms focused exclusively on African-American and African women and viewed sexism and racism as related issues. Additionally, marriage and motherhood are seen as part of the African women's experience and are considered as roles of empowerment rather than passiveness. Besides, coexistence and mutual respect among the sexes are advocated in womanism and African womanisms since it has been a part of their culture.

Nonetheless, there are a few divergences among the different concepts of African Womanisms. While Stiwanism and Motherism emphasize the cooperation between men and women, the other types focus firmly on women and their independence. Even though African womanists do not compete with men, they still believe in women's ability to live and survive without the need to rely on them. Besides, Motherism denies the existence of a patriarchal society in Africa prior to colonization and blames Western ideologies and religions for it. Whereas, African Womanisms believe that patriarchy was embedded in African societies' way before the arrival of colonial powers.

Although all the concepts under African Feminism and Womanism bear different names and have little dissimilarity among them, they build on the same principles and serve the same purposes. Firstly, they support the ideas of interdependence, gender inclusiveness and equality. Secondly, they promote the positive affirmation and appreciation of African women and culture. Thirdly, they encourage the opposition of the patriarchal structures especially those that hinder the advancement of a thriving gender balance. Fourthly, they insist on cooperation and coexistence between the sexes. Finally, these feminisms and womanisms are practically suited to the needs of African women regardless of class, race, and cultural bias.

The aforementioned concepts that originate from and share similar principles with Womanism aim at improving and transforming the African gender relations and problems, while maintaining the complementary relationships between men and women. This is thanks to the principles of the African traditional beliefs which are built on respect and love for both men and women who cannot exist in isolation from one another. Therefore, African Feminists and Womanists aim at discovering different options and alternatives in order to help African women to transcend the existing patriarchal structures and overcome their oppression whilst preserving harmony and unity with their male counterparts.

1.6 Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter is an overview of the Feminist movement in America and how it failed to accommodate the needs of women of color. Then, it shed light on the struggles that black women had to endure since they were disregarded from both women's and black's movements. Moreover, the end of this chapter introduced the emergence of a movement that empowered black women and provided them with a powerful voice both in America and other African countries. Thereafter, the second chapter will deal with the contrasting portrayal of female characters in pieces of literature by men and women. Next, it will tackle the

difference between man and woman's writing styles and discussed themes mainly in African literature.

*Chapter Two:
The African
Experience in Men
and Women Writings*

Chapter Two: The African Experience in Men and Women Writings

2.1 Introduction

The cultural and patriarchal aspects of a certain society are proved to influence the literature of that specific environment. Thus, African literature is an embodiment of its society and portrays its characters in relation to its norms and traditions. This chapter aims to provide an overview of the position of women in African culture and society. Then, it intends to demonstrate the portrayal of African women as female characters in novels by both genders. Furthermore, it presents a variety of differences regarding the writings of men and women authors and the themes they tackle.

2.2 The Status of Women in the African Culture

In the African culture, women held two different and opposing positions. On one hand, women are considered equals to their male counterparts; they are seen as gifts to society because of the numerous roles they hold in different fields such as politics and the economy. On the other hand, they are oppressed and regarded as subordinate to men since they are subjugated to various unfair practices namely lack of education, and maltreatment in marriage because of certain values that are implanted through tradition and culture.

Women before colonization participated in the political sphere in Africa especially in the process of making decisions regarding tribal affairs. However, the colonizers “simply swept aside previous female political structures in society” (Ogundipe-Leslie 25). Thus excluding women from public and political affairs and turning it into a male-dominated structure where women’s voices are neither heard nor considered.

These changes also influenced the economic area seeing that colonization brought with it ideas of patriarchy and attitudes of male superiority. The customs of pre-colonial times allowed African women to contribute to the growth of the economic field. Onwurah stresses the mutual dependence and partnership between the African husband and his wife (144).

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Thus, women helped men in land and crops in order to fulfill the needs of their children. However, colonization changed the traditional way in which Africans handled their economy by shifting them from food crops to cash crops. The latter was reserved for men in addition to other fields. Consequently, women's participation was diminished.

During the colonial period, education became available in several African countries; nevertheless, it was only obtainable for males. Education for females was not a choice since it was believed that it would cause a serious hindrance to women's roles in their traditional duties. Thus, the exclusion of women from the educational system obstructed their chances of learning many skills including the skill of writing. Even in the postcolonial era, the African's beliefs and patriarchal attitudes led parents into favoring education for males rather than females.

Marriage is a sacred relationship in the African culture; therefore, these relations are conducted according to society's norms and values. First, women were regularly forced into marriages and had no choice in choosing their husbands. Second, African men practiced polygamy which was uncommon in Western countries and partly unaccepted. Finally, women were subjugated to all kinds of violence during their marriages starting from mental abuse to physical abuse and they were even killed in some cases. Arisi and Oromareghake claim that all over Africa, women are subjected to domestic violence which is shockingly not deemed as a crime (371).

In addition to physical violence, African women have to endure a form of emotional and psychological violence as well. Acts that are demoralizing for women such as verbal abuse, threats, and negligence are practiced to a large extent. Furthermore, the cultural norms of African societies still put women through horrific practices including circumcision and widowhood practices that make women's lives unbearable after the death of their husbands.

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The African culture and tradition have continually favored and assisted the growth of the African male at the expense of his female counterparts. Even though both of them were exploited by the colonizing powers, men gained more opportunities in the different fields while women were left at the sidelines and bore the aftermaths of colonization by themselves. Such exploitation is visible in the modern African literature which carries the Western ideologies that were forced on the African culture and thus explaining the negligence and misrepresentation of women.

2.1 Representation/Misrepresentation of Women in African Literature

The Patriarchal system created between men and women is a result of the social and cultural constructs which gave a high profile to men and a very low profile to women in society. The same attitude is often demonstrated through the literature of male authors who rarely grant a primary status to female characters and instead glorify male characters and present them as dominant and supreme to empower men's status. Thus, it is an indisputable fact that male authored African literature reflected the mistreatment of women and distorted their image and reality as well.

Men have dominated the literary field since ancient times, whilst women had little or no opportunity to represent themselves either subjectively or objectively. Male authors took advantage of this fact and provided a one-sided portrayal of female characters in their works, mainly representing women as weak, fragile, and submissive individuals with no important role in their societies.

Regardless of the role that women played in society, they were always given a secondary role in works of literature written by men and the main female characters were portrayed as supplements to the male protagonists by performing the role of the mother, wife, or daughter. Thus, the female characters are only introduced in works by male writers to enhance the

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picture provided for the male protagonist and to further ennoble their manliness at the expense of the women in their novels.

The representation of female characters in African literature varies to a significant degree between the images portrayed by men and women authors. On one hand, women writers tend to represent the reality of African women by portraying them as active members of society. On the other hand, male writers derive from their masculine point of view in creating their female characters. They tend to degrade the role that women offer to society and portray them only as appendages of the male protagonists who play prominent roles in their works.

2.3.1 One Side of the Coin

African literature is full of writings that generate male superiority and traditional masculinity and the representation of men as a supreme power has been present in the African literary classics for a prolonged period of time. African male authors emphasized the importance of their male characters and entirely neglected female characters.

In that vein, Kolawole states that most male authors in the early phase of African literature promoted the alienation and exclusion of women (79). Hence this explains that the poor representation of the female characters in the African novels and their subordination to the heroic male characters was quite intentional.

The patriarchal oppression and repression of women were fundamental in the creation of the main events and characters of the literary works of the African male writers, which projected the masculine gender as powerful and tyrannical, and the feminine gender as docile and obedient. Kumah notes that “Female characters in male-authored works are rarely granted primary status their roles often trivialized to varying degrees and they are depicted as silent and submissive in nature”(6).

The role of women in early African literature is clearly a subordinate and negative one. The majority of male writers attributed the traditional roles of wife and mother to their female

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characters and stressed their inability to go beyond these roles. Women in their novels are constantly depicted as the silent members of the family, the bearers of children, the dependent, ignorant, voiceless and powerless human beings who belong to their homes and are in charge of their kitchens.

According to Chukukere (1995), “a woman’s honour and dignity often consist in her adherence to idealized norms of wifhood and motherhood (7). Accordingly, if a woman does not choose the path of being a wife and a mother or simply is not able to fulfill these demands, she would not acquire recognition and respect from her male counterparts. Thus, as the weaker sex, the female characters demonstrate their abidance and submissiveness to the social norms and pre-established roles in order to gain the acceptance of the male characters.

Even when female characters are granted important roles in male-authored works, their parts are usually used to further degrade women’s position. They are either portrayed as victims of the cruelty of their society, its norms and values, or other men in their lives. Accordingly, they are viewed as victims in the sense that they have no option but to adhere to the consequences of certain traditions such as arranged marriages in which women’s views and opinions are not considered. In addition, their female characters are constantly commanded and mastered by their male characters which usually play the roles of their fathers or husbands

On top of that, they play the role of immoral women who present a bad picture of the African woman. They are either depicted as prostitutes, mistresses, or products and objects of men’s pleasure. These portrayals are used either to dictate the kind of behaviors that women should not follow or to dishonor and shame women.

The literary works of well-known African authors such as Chinua Achebe, Elechi Amadi and Cyprian Ekwensi depict a world where men are courageous, while women are meek and subdued. The great events of their stories were destined for the male characters, while the

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female's role was confined to motherhood, marriage, and other domestic matters. Women were predominantly objects that were marginal to the central themes and were left in the periphery of events.

Achebe in his first novels such as *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* creates a world that centers on strong and violent men, an androcentric world where men hold the power over everything including their wives. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe portrays women as men's possessions throughout which they show their masculinities by beating and forbidding them from having a say in their own matters. Furthermore, in *Arrow of God* Achebe depicts women as slaves and animals who are treated cruelly and continuously beaten.

Another example of women's exclusion is *The Concubine* a prominent work of Elechi Amadi which depicts a society where the portrayal of women complies with tradition's rigid rules. Women in Omakachi village cannot move a step further from the social path that is traced for them by their male counterparts. His female characters had no right in choosing their marriage partners, and were considered as social misfits, and brought wrath and disappointment to their families and societies if they were unable to produce male heirs.

Finally, even when women were not depicted as wives or mothers they didn't receive the recognition they deserved. In Cyprian Ekwensi's novel *Jagua Nana*, Cyprian proclaims that the only role a woman could have besides her traditional role is an immoral one. His female protagonist is a prostitute, who is only independent because she makes her money unethically. Despite her freedom from marriage, she is still owned by other men and controlled in every aspect of her life.

In the works of male African authors, women were always granted negative and mainly pathetic roles. However, there is an impression that the situation is shifting. Female characters are assuming more positive roles and playing a more constructive part in African literature

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since the emergence of female writers and other authors who are aware of women's state in society.

2.3.2 The Other Side of the Coin

In African literature, the emerging women writers joined the literary field with a passion to reevaluate, reconsider, and rewrite the circumstances of women's experiences. Most notably, they aimed to redefine the identity of African females in the face of the former exclusion of women from the literary scene and misrepresentation of women by male authors. Female and Womanist authors try to revisit the female question in order to represent their case truthfully and to shift their role from voiceless and silent to noticeable characters that play a part in the course of events.

African female authors portray their female characters in an extremely different way than their male counterparts. Women authors are more likely to present female characters in more realistic ways because they use them to reflect on their own experiences. Moreover, they aim to create role models and independent characters that would influence and empower African women.

Anyidoho pointed out that "As a counter to these negative representations, women writers have taken pains to portray women in more sympathetic and dignified ways" (16). That is, these female authors frequently strive to create a world of women in which female characters live in their own right, not just as insignificant accessories of men. Furthermore, in such fictionalized worlds women sometimes hold powerful positions and are even regarded as superior to the male characters.

The responsibility of African female authors is especially onerous since they have to challenge the myths presented by their hierarchical patriarchal systems. Nonetheless, they attempt to correct misconceptions about the assigned role of women within the domestic sphere as they are represented in male-authored works. These authors attempt to

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empower women to see themselves beyond their roles as wives, mothers, and daughters and encourage them to create a personal identity.

Female writers portray female characters who have worked to prove their strengths and renounce the established ideologies of patriarchy that keep them suppressed. In their novels, they present an array of female characters that are independent, confident, determined, and able to develop and transform their identities positively. They refuse to portray their characters as victims of their societies; they rather highlight the growth and transformation of young female characters by delineating their courage and strength in resisting the restraints of their patriarchal world.

African female writers like Flora Nwapa, Ama Ata Aidoo, Buchi Emecheta, and many others took upon themselves the duty to deconstruct patriarchy and reconstruct a new portrait of the African woman. Their portrayal of the female characters is different from former portrayals presented by male authors and even their literary ancestresses. This difference is explained by the instant desire of these authors to modify and even transform the conventional and standard image of the African woman in the characterization of African male authors.

In an interview with Marie Umeh (1995), Nwapa declared that she attempts to reflect the independence, diligence, and optimism of African women, and to present a positive image of them through her writings (27). Thus, Nwapa believes in the potential of African women and consequently tries to mirror their talents and prospects in her writing.

Consequently, these African female authors were able to change the patterns of writing about African women. By embodying womanist characteristics they created independent and empowered female characters that provide a realistic representation of African women and the enormous role they play in society.

Initially, Flora Nwapa aimed to change the stories and portrayals of male authors through her books by providing stories about the success of African women who have a mind of their

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own, and make unconventional choices. According to her: “[women] are not only mothers; they are not only palm collectors; they are not only traders; but they are also wealthy people, women can stand on their own” (27). This is depicted in her novels *Efuru* (1966) and *Idu* (1970), through which Nwapa called into question the traditional norms that were compelled on women and radically changed the image of the traditional African woman.

Additionally, Ama Ata Aidoo makes the effort to make her female characters on top of any action. Her novel *Anowa* (1970) tells the story of a girl who defies tradition, preferring to choose a husband for herself and also attempts to live a life that suits her rather than listening to others’ judgments. Her protagonist shows a rebellious attitude towards her family and society as a whole thus changing the traditional beliefs.

Lastly, the female characters in Buchi Emecheta’s novels depict the new Igbo women. In her novel *Second Class Citizen* (1974), the protagonist Adah is an unusual Igbo girl who does not submit to the oppressive patriarchal society. Adah is successful at being the producer of her own destiny by aspiring to be independent due to her education and economic self-sufficiency.

To conclude, African women felt the necessity to join the literary train because as women they desired to rectify the mistaken beliefs which had been commonly popular in a male-dominated literature. In other words, female writers used literature as an avenue to tell their own truths and to describe themselves in their own words. They aimed to create powerful female protagonists by making them the center of attention. This enabled the women portrayed in their fiction to embrace their experiences and use them in dealing with and moving beyond the different difficulties they face.

2.4 Gender and Writing Style

The representation of female characters is not the only difference that can be seen in novels written by men and women authors. Some studies have acknowledged the existence

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of different writing styles between women and men due to educational inequality, social structures, and the genres they write.

A small and growing number body of literature has investigated and tried to discover the differences between the writing styles of female and male authors. Studies conducted by linguists such as Shlomo Argamon et al (2003) showed that such differences do exist, and they are especially apparent in the writer's use of parts of speech.

2.4.1 Pronouns

A study conducted by Biber (1995) on different writings by men and women showed that female-authored works include features identified as “involved” and male-authored works exhibit more usage of features identified as “informational” (as cited in Shlomo Argamon et al 4). In other words, female authors tend to involve themselves in their texts to create a relationship between the writer and the reader, whereas male authors prefer to distance themselves from their texts which is evident in their use of pronouns.

The usage of pronouns is overwhelming by female authors. Initially, female authors mainly use singular and second person pronouns for the first person including I and you in order to fortify the writer-reader relationship. However, male authors presumably avoid mentioning it. Moreover, female authors put much emphasis on the gender of their characters or the object they refer to.

According to Argamon et al “third-person pronouns (he, she) is far greater for females than males in both fiction and non-fiction” (10). Furthermore, men have a tend to use common-gender pronouns and plural pronouns such as “we and they” in order to avoid the specific reference to gender.

Since men's writing has been considered as the norm, women's usage of pronouns is evidently due to their previous negligence from the literary sphere. Women tend to use

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pronouns that specify the gender of the thing they are writing about in order to mark their presence in their literary works and go beyond men's weak representation of them.

2.4.2 Adjectives and adverbs

According to Lakoff (2004), there are words restricted to women's language since they are considered feminine. In her book *Language and Women's Place*, she argues that there are neutral adjectives, which implies that they can be used by both men and women, but other adjectives are considered to be confined to women. She states that adjectives such as "Adorable, charming, sweet, lovely, and divine" are restricted for women while "Great, terrific, cool, and neat" (103) can be used by both genders.

Additionally, women prefer to use adjectives and adverbs as a means to embellish and heighten their descriptions. For example, pretty and nice are adjectives that women use consistently, as illustrated in *Women, Men and Language* by Coates (2015).

Moreover, women employ emotional adverbs in their fictional works, while men use adverbs showing pace and rate (Hiatt 1977). She adds that women use the adverb *really* more frequently than men which indicates a lack of assertiveness, and other adverbs such as *however* which indicate the lack of authority.

Mary Hiatt tried to investigate the existence of a linguistic difference between feminine and masculine writing styles in her book *The Way Women Write*. In her major study, she states that women's "stylistic complexity is far less individualized than is that of the men". Therefore, suggesting that men write long, complex, and more varied sentences while women write short sentences because apparently, they are not courageous enough (34).

Besides, she adds that parenthetical statements are labeled as belonging to women's writings. Hiatt clarifies this by explaining that women tend to feel that their statements are somehow dispensable; consequently, they use parentheses for expressions that they believe

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are unnecessary (45). This emphasizes women's lack of confidence regarding the subject they are tackling.

Feminist theorists share the assumption that women authors exceed men in their usage of metaphors. By way of illustration, Ellen Moers suggests that bird metaphors are used exceedingly by women in their depiction of females in their novels (Moers as cited in M. Eagleton 266). It is assumed that such metaphors reflect badly on women's writings since it attributes their weaknesses and affirms their sensuality.

The features mentioned above depict men's writing as being denotative and women's writing as expressive. Female writers choose grammatical terms that point out personal relationships, they use pronouns, adjectives, and adverbs of emotion to create an interactive style that reinforces their connection with the reader, they also use metaphors to describe their internal experiences. Whereas, male writers are more interested in assuring that the message and information they want to convey is received, explaining their use of plural pronouns in order to depersonalize their writings and to assert their confidence.

2.5 Thematic shifts in African Writing

Plenty of early African written literature, and mostly literary works that succeeded colonization, focused on the social and political implication in colonization and African's struggles within its confines. In this vein, African writers wrote intending to change and correct the African history and identity that was deeply distorted by Western countries. Hence, the fictionalized worlds of African female and male writers may be different, yet they originated from similar standpoints.

African male writers who wrote in English aimed at reintroducing the African history on their own terms. They wanted to express their discontent with European's portrayal of Africa, protest against colonialism, and confirm the strength of the African cultural values. Given this, Achebe indicated that all African writers should be "cultural nationalists". For that

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reason, the themes of nationalism and liberation are constantly present in African postcolonial literature since the duty of “re-education and regeneration” (44) as mentioned by Achebe in his article “The Role of the Writer in a New Nation”, falls on the hands of the African writer.

Another theme that African male authors tackle frequently is the conflict of culture and social and economic change. Throughout their literary works, these writers focus on the cultural clash created by western colonization. They emphasize the struggle Africans faced due to the juxtaposition of two different cultures, which led them to be torn apart between their old culture and the new assimilated one.

In a similar vein, Kolawole claims that male authors focused on “Major themes that revolve around men confronting colonialism, struggling for independence and attempting to manage the first generation of postcolonial Africans” (80). Thus, those authors dealt with both colonial and postcolonial issues in their works.

So, because African male writers focused on correcting the misrepresentation of Africa in Western countries and literature, they did not pay attention to women’s issues and were mainly focused on portraying postcolonial issues as a whole. Furthermore, even when they presented the problems that women faced, they did so in an irrelevant way. Thus, they discussed themes such as female abuse and polygamy and rendered them as appropriate and acceptable without mentioning their influence on women.

For that reason, the correction of the negative exposure of African women and the introduction of their realities was the female author’s responsibility. Since the female presence and truth were “either distorted in, or deleted from, African literature by men” (Ogundipe-Leslie 8).

African women writers tend to explore issues that relate closely to them and their realities in African society. According to Ogundipe-Leslie, all African women suffered from “the

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insecurity of polygynous marriage, the social compulsion to have children, the denial of safe, legal contraceptives and abortion” (4). Thus, themes of marriage, polygamy, motherhood, and women’s oppression are recurrent in their works. Such themes are seen in the most prominent works of the pioneers of female African literature as Flora Nwapa, Mariama Bâ, and Ata Aidoo.

The themes discussed by these female writers revolve around the African woman and put her at the center of attention. In their works, they provide the readers with the harsh conditions and the brutality that these women endured in their lives. Moreover, they defy the circumstances, and through different themes such as women’s independence and women’s strength, they aim to empower the African women and show them the road to success.

Moreover, literary texts reflect the ideologies of Feminist and Womanist movements. Female authors benefited from such ideas and created pieces of literature that describe the oppression and discrimination of women in Africa. These writers emphasized the criticism of patriarchal structures, gender roles, and the affirmation of the traditional traits that enhance the African women’s positive image.

In that claim, Susan Arndt presents three different types of African feminist literature that discuss different themes in her article “Perspectives on African feminism: defining and classifying African-feminist literatures” (2002). First, the reformist type considers men as allies of women and rarely criticizes the acts of oppression that the African women are subjugated to (33). It aims at creating positive alternatives and new roles for women in society without intervening in men’s positions. Among reformist African literature authors are Sindiwe Magona and Grace Ogot who belong to the pioneers of African writers and their works are hugely based on stiwaniist and motherist principles.

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Second, the transformative type which in contrast to the reformist one criticizes men to a large extent but believes in their ability to transform radically for the better. Such literary texts represent “a positive counter-concept to what is criticized” (34). The authors of transformative literature such as Buchi Emecheta, Mariama Bâ, and Ama Ata Aidoo can be considered as stiwanists since they believe in the positive transformation and inclusion of women in society. While they strongly criticize and are hostile to the harsh and authoritarian treatment of men, they still believe in their ability to change and improve.

Finally, the radical type entirely denies the possibility of change regarding gender relations and men’s oppressive attitudes towards women. It rejects all forms of oppression against women even if it is based on their African culture. The contemporary female African writers tend to follow this type, including Kenyan authors of *They’ve destroyed the temple* (1992).

African female authors provided different and diverse views concerning the status of women in Africa. The introduction of female characters that vary from oppressed to being an ally with men, and male characters who show a willingness of change while others who are blinded by immorality, demonstrate the different themes and issues they tackled.

Another theme that both African male and female authors tackle and focus on is the theme of identity. This is due to the fact that Africans were ripped of their identities by the colonizers. However, they deal with the theme in different ways since African women faced a double subjugation from Westerners and their own men.

Male writers tend to focus on decolonizing their minds and recapturing their original identities outside of any Western influence. Moreover, they try to highlight the traditional African traits that distinguish them from the rest of the world and put them into value, as Achebe claims: “African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and

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beauty, that they had poetry and, above all, they had dignity” (3). However, while doing so they tend to disregard the existence of women or adding them only as means of decoration.

In contrast, African female writers emphasize women’s journey in finding self-identity and self-realization. According to Susan Willis: “they [Black female writers] treat journey as means of self-knowledge through re-entry into collective historical experience” (211). Without overlooking the creation of an identity bare from Western ideologies, they focus on the transformation and the creation of a new identity that also transcends sexist issues.

2.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter provided an overview about the status of women in African culture. Moreover, it shed light on the misrepresentation of African women in male authored works and the rectification of female authors in regard to such distortion. Additionally, it introduced and described the dissimilarity between women’s and men’s writing styles and themes. Subsequently, the final chapter will conduct a comparative study between Achebe’s novel *Things Fall Apart* and Nwapa’s novel *Efuru* in regards to women’s portrayal.

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of the Novels*

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3.1 Introduction

In their novels, *Things Fall Apart* and *Efuru*, both Chinua Achebe and Flora Nwapa set their fictionalized works in the Igbo society. However, they do so in two distinct ways by portraying contrasting characters and similar themes in incompatible manners. This chapter aims at analyzing varied aspects of the novel in the light of literary womanist theory, by taking into consideration the ensemble of characterization, thematic, and writing style differences.

3.2 Exploring the Characters

Achebe's fictional world in *Things Fall Apart* is a world of men's supremacy and women's subservience. While in Nwapa's fiction of *Efuru* the roles are reversed. Thus, females in her novel hold a state of greatness, unlike males who carry less significant roles.

3.2.1 Male Characters

Initially, Okonkwo the protagonist of *Things Fall Apart* is presented by Achebe as the personification of masculinity in the Igbo society. As a character, he carries all the characteristics of manhood. Okonkwo is strong and holds massive physical strength; he is brave on account of the fact that he always leads tribal combats and brings spoils of war back to Umuofia. Moreover, he is a hardworking, dignified head of his family, and holds pride in his abounding possessions of titles, yams, and women.

By the same token, Ikemefuna the adopted son of Okonkwo is a powerful, manly, and hardworking boy. Okonkwo loves and appreciates him more than his own son because of the manliness he possesses. He is considered as a mentor for Okonkwo's real son and teaches him to become a true man according to their village's standards.

Alongside Okonkwo, there is his father Unoka, who represents everything Okonkwo despises. Unoka is a lazy man who did not possess any fortune and did not work hard enough

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to obtain it. In addition, he was not a man of his word since he was indebted to all his neighbors and failed to pay any of them back.

In a similar vein, Okonkwo's son Nwoye is seen by his father as an effeminate character that resembles his grandfather's weakness and laziness. He manages to obtain his father's love and respect with the help of Ikemefuna who teaches him the peculiarity of manhood. Yet, despite his efforts, he loses his father's regard when he shifts away from the customs of the Igbo culture. This symbolizes that manliness is a trait owned by those who follow the norms of their societies.

Despite the positive characteristics attributed to Okonkwo's character, the negative aspects of his personality exceed them. In the androcentric world of the novel, virility is considered as a man's quality. To attain that quality, Okonkwo uses violence in his household with his wives and children and in his tribe with his male counterparts. He considers violence as means to hide any feminine traits that he might have inherited from his father and uses it to hide any form of emotion he may display.

By contrast, the male characters in *Efuru* assume more feminine characteristics. In the first instance, Efuru's first husband Adizua is a weak and irresponsible man. First, he fails to pay Efuru's marital dowry which demeans his position among the men of the Igbo society. Second, he is dependent on his wife and leaves his work on the farm to join his wife's trading business. But then again, he fails to manage the business in his wife's absence after the birth of their child and causes significant losses. Finally, he proves to be useless both in the working sphere and at home since he can neither take care of their newly born nor run his wife's work appropriately.

In the second place, there is Eneberi the second husband of Efuru. In the beginning, Eneberi is presented as an intellectual man who values and loves Efuru. Nevertheless, he is similar to Adizua in his weakness. Eneberi lacks the courage and bravery to confess his

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infidelity to Efurū and to tell her about his illegitimate child, even though she did not disapprove of polygamy. Moreover, he abandons Efurū in her time of need and deserts her without any explanation about neither his whereabouts nor the truth about his son.

3.2.2 Female Characters

Women in *Things Fall Apart* are presented as weak, passive, inferior, and mostly secondary characters. To start with, Okonkwo's wives are considered as his properties and are merely used as accessories to put in the best light Okonkwo's character. They are constantly abused for no apparent reasons and have no right to speak their minds making them invisible characters.

First, Ekwefi the wife of Okonkwo is not given a name in the first instances of the novel; she is only addressed as his second wife and is pictured as a worthless supplement in his life. Ekwefi fails to properly conduct her wifely and motherly role, thus she is judged by her inability to procreate strong male inheritors for her husband and only delivering him a daughter.

Second, Okonkwo's daughter Enzima receives the same treatment as her mother regardless of her intelligence and endurance. Her father wishes that she was born a boy and while he values her, he cannot show his affection for her solely because of her gender. Furthermore, he underestimates her potential and overlooks her attempts to participate in different chores. An evidence of such marginalization can be seen when Okonkwo refuses that Enzima brings him a chair simply because he believes "that is a boy's job" (41).

Finally, the other female characters of the novel do not hold important roles and are on all occasions subordinated and restrained. An example of such subordination is Okonkwo's first wife which is unnamed or simply referred to as Nwoye's mother. The fact that she gave birth to a male child does not change her condition and her husband's treatment. She holds no

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power in the household and is frequently silenced when she speaks her mind. This is seen when she asks Oknokwo about the period that Ikemefuna will be living under their roof, Oknokwo answers with “do what you’re told woman... when did you become one of the ndiche of Umofia” (14).

Conversely, the female characters of *Efuru* are the foundation of the society in Nwapa’s world. They are portrayed as women who defy the stereotypes that are imposed on them, and carry features of powerful, hardworking, and ambitious women who are ready to change and assume significant roles in their societies at any price. By taking matters into their own hands and deciding their own faiths they prove to be the perfect embodiment of a womanist.

To begin, the protagonist of the novel *Efuru* symbolizes the true African woman in the Igbo society. She holds a valid part in both her family and her community as a wife and working woman. *Efuru* is a determined and patient woman; she demonstrates a sense of free will and challenges the traditions of her society by choosing her own husband and marrying him without the approval of her father and the payment of a bride price.

In her second marriage, *Efuru* remains faithful to her husband and provides him with unlimited support. She shows the morality of an understanding wife after she accepts that her husband marries a second wife. However, she does not hesitate to leave him as soon as he becomes unfaithful and a thief.

In both of her marriages, *Efuru* was able to provide for her household. She is a symbol of an economically independent, hardworking, influential woman who depends on her own flourishing trading business rather than relying on men. Furthermore, she is a resilient woman and can carry on with her life without the need for a husband or a child.

The second major female character in the novel is *Ajanupu*, *Efuru*’s friend and the sister of her mother-in-law. *Ajanupu* is a huge contributor to society, she is educated in the traditional

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sense, and therefore, she holds the position of the town's doctor and nurse. She is the one who detects Efuru's pregnancy, delivers her baby, and even treats her with traditional medicine.

She has a sense of right and wrong and is strict regarding matters of fairness. This is viewed as she supports and stands by Efuru's side even against the injustice of the son of her sister. Moreover, she plays the role of a teacher of cultural values and aims at educating the children with folktales and providing them with the right manners.

To conclude, the contrast between the female characters of *Things Fall Apart* and *Efuru* is highly apparent. On one hand, Ekwefi, Enzima and the rest of Oknokwo's wives are silent, subservient, and docile characters. On the other hand, Efuru and Ajanupu are able to redefine their roles as women and free themselves from gender marginalization by being independent and strong-willed characters.

3.3 Conventional versus Unconventional Marriage

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe presents marital relationships that combine with the Igbo traditions and culture. First, Okonkwo is unable to marry Ekwefi due to his inability to afford her dowry. Then, as soon as he becomes richer Ekwefi leaves her first husband and marries him. Second, Okonkwo is the superintendent of his family. He is the one that makes the orders and takes control over all of his household matters. Finally, it is Okonkwo who provides for his wives and children by working in yam crops.

Even though some researchers believe that the marriage between Okonkwo and Ekwefi is unconventional, certain events in the novel prove otherwise. For instance, Maria Lowe sees that Ekwefi shows an independence of mind in choosing Okonkwo instead of her first husband (8). Be that as it may, she only chooses him when he thrives and becomes wealthy. Thus, this further emphasizes the qualities of Okonkwo and his success in getting the woman he wanted through his money.

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However, in *Efuru* the characters of the novel fail to adhere to their society's conventions. This starts when Efuru decides to get married to Adizua without her father's consent or the demand of a dowry. Moreover, she refuses to come back to her birthplace with the group of wise men that were sent by her father to convince her that "your husband must fulfill the customs of our people. It is important" (9). This shows that Efuru opposes the customs of forced marriage and favors freedom when it comes to her personal life choices.

Moreover, unlike the world of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* where it is a man's job to supply money to take care of his family, in *Efuru* the tables were turned. In her marriage with Adizua, Efuru takes upon herself the responsibility to provide for her family after her husband left his work at the farm. It was her business that fed them, nurtured their baby, and paid for his caretaker.

Furthermore, Efuru refuses to accept the circumstances of her first marriage. After the disappearance of Adizua, she decides to leave her husband's home and says: "ancestors forbid that I should wait for a man to drive me out of his house" (63). This portrays Efuru's courage and unconventionality which is unfamiliar in the African tradition. Nevertheless, she does not allow herself to be pitied or condemned for being a grass widow. Instead, she decides to reconstruct her life, falls in love again, and marries Eneberi.

Finally, Efuru as projected by Nwapa does not resemble the majority of the women who accept to live in miserable and uncommunicative relationships. Rather, she is presented as a strong woman who possesses the boldness to defy the traditional rites of marriage and confront the disloyalty of her husbands instead of remaining silent. Despite her failed marriages and her childlessness, she manages to find other sources of happiness.

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3.3.1 Polygamous Relations

When reading *Things Fall Apart*, polygyny; which is a man's marriage to several wives at the same time, seems to be honored and holds a big part of the Igbo society. However, it espouses the viewpoint of women being inferior, subordinate, and mere possessions of men.

First and foremost, the masculine world that Achebe presents denotes the multiplicity of wives as a sign of manliness and prominence. The more a person has wives the more he is highly regarded in society. Thus, this implants the idea in Okonkwo's mind that the number of wives is equivalent to one's fortune and property. For this reason, he holds high esteem for his father's friend who had three wives, and despises his father who only had one wife.

Even more, Okonkwo finds satisfaction in taking control and holding power over his wives. Even though he succeeds in attaining status and value due to the number of his wives, he mistreats them constantly and fails to offer them an honorable and dignified life.

On the other hand, it can be seen that Nwapa does not disagree with polygyny. However, she does not attribute it with the same value as Achebe. Both Efuru's husbands resort to infidelity rather than asking for their wife's consent for a second marriage though she does not disapprove of it as she says: "I don't object to his marrying a second wife, but I do object to being relegated to the background" (62).

Next, Eneberri does not give the impression that he is interested in a second wife at the beginning of his marriage with Efuru. However, he cheats on Efuru and gets a child from an affair with another woman outside of marriage. Moreover, he decides to marry a second wife after Efuru could not provide him with a son, but shockingly he does not choose the mother of his boy to be his wife and instead brings him to Efuru to raise him. This makes his second wife Nkoyeni jealous of not being the first woman to provide Eneberri with a son. Thus, this

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creates an unpleasant atmosphere in the household and results in divisions between the female characters.

Last but not least, in a world where men are allowed to practice polygamy while women do not hold the same privilege, Efuru can be seen as the exception. Not in a sense that she was married to two different men at the same time, but in a way that she replaced her first husband Adizua with Eneberi after he deserted her.

Ultimately, the two novels share the same setting and same cultural values that allow the practice of polygamous relations. Nevertheless, it is evident that Achebe glorifies such practice and uses it as a way to emphasize the subordination and docility of his female characters. Whereas, Nwapa manages to conserve her respect for the African traditions while maintaining great esteem for her protagonist.

3.3.2 Physical versus Emotional Abuse

The world of Umofia presented by Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* is a world filled with tolerated violence against women. Besides, brutality is even considered an expression of manliness and strength.

Throughout the novel, the protagonist Okonkwo beats his wives unjustifiably on several occasions. His desire to manifest his masculinity and to overpower the feminine presence in his life is demonstrated in his brutal acts. His second wife Ekwefi suffered greatly from his angry temper. For instance, she cuts a few leaves from the banana tree, and for this “Okonkwo gave her a sound beating and left her and her only daughter weeping” (38). Furthermore, he threatens her with a gun and shoots a strayed bullet in an empty direction leaving all his wives shaken with fear.

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Another example of wife-beating is seen in the fourth chapter, when this time according to the narrator Okonkwo's anger was "justifiable" (29). This justification is explained in relation to the failure of his third wife Ojugo to prepare a meal for him and her children. Therefore, he unleashed his anger on her without taking into consideration the sacredness of the Week of Peace.

Surprisingly in the same chapter, Okonkwo is punished by the priest of the goddess of the earth Ani for hitting his wife Ojunpe. However, it is later cleared up that the punishment was not for the beating itself but for it to occur during the Week of Peace. This shows that abuse is allowed in the Igbo culture as long as it does not disrupt the holiness of their deities.

In this vein, it can be seen that Okonkwo's anger is intensified and his brutal actions and beatings of his wives are numerous during the Feast of the New Yam in chapters four and five. This can be related to his contempt and despise of any feminine presence. Thus, it is clear that he finds difficulty in celebrating the goddess of Earth Ani.

In the novel of Nwapa, Efuru faces a different type of abuse. The betrayal of her two husbands and their constant lies leaves Efuru in a state of loss, grief, and with damaged self-esteem and doubt. Furthermore, Eneberi's accusation of adultery crashes her soul and spirit and destroys her confidence and trust both in herself and others. Still, being the strong willed woman she is, Efuru manages to get past all these insecurities and mental abuses and rebuild a confident and highly esteemed character for herself.

To end, Nwapa subjugates Efuru to mental abuses with the aim of empowering and developing the identity of her character. However, Achebe portrays abuse and violence against Okonkwo's wives as an accepted part of the Umofia culture. Moreover, he uses it as a means to further degrade women's position in African society.

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3.4 Female Solidarity versus Antagonism

Nwapa's novel *Efuru* shows characteristics of Womanism, among them the love and support shared by African women. The most appropriate embodiment of such conduct is the character of Ajanupu.

First, Ajanupu is regularly trusted by Efuru in her private matters and constantly offers her assistance and help. She is there for her during her son's sickness and her grief for the death of her father and child. Furthermore, she does not assist in the gossip that is in circulation regarding Efuru's bareness; instead, she is the one who comforts her. Moreover, Ajanupu stands by her side even against her sister's son Adizua and shames him for his infidelity to such an amazing woman.

Next, Ajanupu shows her extreme support for Efuru by the end of the novel. At one point, Efuru gets sick and is accused by her second husband Eneberi of adultery. Notwithstanding that Eneberi was having several relationships outside of marriage. At this moment, Ajanupu lashes her anger towards him by yelling at him: "You don't know that we know that you were jailed. And here you are accusing Efuru, the daughter of Nwashike Ogene of adultery" (275-276). This shows that Ajanupu dared to stand up to a man, and couldn't accept the fact that a woman like her; especially Efuru her friend was accused of such misdeeds.

Eneberi is angry that Ajanupu has the audacity to respond to him in that manner. Therefore, he slaps her. But Ajanupu did not sit silently and with docility. Rather, she gets up and breaks a "mortar pestle" (276) on his head. This not only shows women's solidarity and unity but also emphasizes women's disapproval of any type of abuse and their strength in confronting men.

On the contrary, in *Things Fall Apart* Okonkwo regularly beats and mistreats his wives. However, they do not have the audacity to stand up for themselves or to defend one another.

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In one of the many batterings of Okonkwo to his second wife Ekwefi, the other wives sit silently and only dare to murmur from a safe distance: “it is enough, Okonkwo” (38).

At last, the female characters of both novels subdue accusations, assaults, and maltreatments. Nevertheless, they confront these issues in different ways. Nwapa’s characters are powerful and do not submit nor accept mistreatment; alternatively, they support and defend each other. On the other hand, Okonkwo’s wives do not show any characteristics of solidarity which emphasizes Achebe’s dehumanizing view of women.

3.5 Motherhood versus Infertility

Motherhood plays an important part in a woman’s life all around the world and especially in the African culture. The role that a woman holds in giving birth to healthy children and specifically male inheritors is highly praised. This fact is affirmed in *Things Fall Apart*, however, in *Efuru* Nwapa shows that this is not necessarily the case.

Throughout Achebe’s novel, it is evident that the female characters are portrayed merely as mothers and child bearers, and even in these roles they carry, they are meant to please their men. Okonkwo is blessed with several children from his various wives. However, he prefers his sons over his daughters. This puts pressure on the females of the novel to provide male inheritors for Okonkwo even if it is beyond their power to do so. This shows that the ability to give birth to children is insufficient in the Igbo culture, what really matters is their gender.

There are several examples in the novel where motherhood is not given much appreciation. However, the one that glares is: “the birth of her children which should be a woman’s crowning glory became for Ekwefi mere physical agony devoid of promise” (67). This refers to Ekwefi’s struggle in her attempt to provide a male progeny for Okonkwo. She is deemed worthless and is regarded as inferior to her female counterparts for her inability to give birth after losing nine children. Furthermore, even when Ekwefi succeeds to bring a child into the

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world she is considered a failure because she delivered a girl. Thus, she did not fulfill her role in providing a male that would carry Okonkwo's name.

While motherhood is the only purpose for the female characters of *Things Fall Apart*, infertility does not restrict the protagonist of *Efuru* from being a happy and prosperous woman. At first, Efuru cannot bear children in her first marriage with Adizua, but when she does she feels like a completed woman. However, her happiness does not last as she loses her child. Then, she suffers a great deal for her inability to have children in her second marriage, she visits doctors and tries traditional medicines but her attempts are futile.

Even so, Efuru did not surrender to her infertility and she did not allow it to be the thing that represents her. Alternatively, she realizes that her life is not only shaped by her ability to give birth and that different things can bring her joy and happiness. Among them is her flourishing business and being an independent woman who manages to participate in the development of her village. This explains the resemblance between Efuru and the goddess of the lake Uhamiri since the latter represents wealth and riches but is not blessed with children.

Last but not least, Nwapa shows through the character of Efuru that women are much more than child bearers, but individuals who can accomplish many achievements and who should not be regarded any less significant for their barrenness. While Achebe demonstrates the absolute opposite by valuing a woman's worth not through her motherhood but through the number of male successors she offers her husband.

3.6 Economic Independence versus Subservience

The Igbo society is known for the complementary roles that its male and female inhabitants play in the economic sphere. Men and women worked hand in hand in order to achieve the prosperity of their villages. However, in *Things Fall Apart* the woman's role is disregarded, while the man's role is given enormous applaud. In contrast, the women of *Efuru* are

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described in a more authentically by taking into consideration the parts they play in the economy.

The economic independence of women is irrelevant in *Things Fall Apart*. In this novel, Achebe portrays his female characters as ultimately reliant and dependant on their husbands for survival. It is Okonkwo who provides for his family members and offers them economic stability and comfort.

In the first place, Okonkwo owns a field of yam crops which is considered as “the king of crops” (23). In Umuofia a man’s possession of such crops renders him masculine and manly since yam is compatible with the qualities of strength, energy, and fertility in a man. Moreover, yam crops bring forth richness and prosperity more than any crops in the village.

On the other hand, the crops that generate little money were coco-yams, beans, and cassava. These crops are directly linked with women, and despite their hard work on them, they are not merely equivalent to the yam crops. Furthermore, besides their work on the farm, Okonkwo believes that his wives belong to their homes and kitchens where they can answer to the needs of their husbands.

On the flip side, women are actually doing most of the farming work. Even if it was Okonkwo who owned the yam crops, it was in fact “the women who weeded the farm three times at definite periods in the life of the yams” (33). This explains that although respect is given to men who own and nurture their families with yam crops, it was in reality women who should be praised for their hard work in the farm. Moreover, it is concluded that Achebe disregards the efforts and contributions that women make in society and fails to give them proper recognition as a way to give further merit and esteem to men.

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In a contradicting way, Nwapa in her novel *Efuru* presents her female characters as independent and successful women. She praises them for their ability to reach prosperity and wealth without the need to rely on any masculine presence in their lives.

Moreover, Nwapa highlights the fact that women hold several positions beside their works in the household. First, women in the village work as farmers alongside their husbands and fathers. Second, they are traders and owners of their own businesses in the market. This is shown when Efuru says: “No woman in our town has time for any other thing except to buy and sell on Nkwo day” (144). Thus, the most apparent example of a working woman and financial independence is the main character Efuru.

To begin, Efuru is different from her female counterparts. She does not accept to work on the farm simply because her husband is a farmer, because she feels that she should put her skills in a domain that she can master and make a profit from. In this vein, she says that “she was not cut out for farm work” (7). In this way Efuru chooses to defy the stereotypical image of the woman who simply does what she is told, instead, she portrays independence of mind in choosing to enroll in a work that sparks her interest.

Then, Efuru starts her trading business and shows great potential in the market. She is highly intelligent and manages to introduce new products to the village’s market such as crayfish which was very popular and gained her a good amount of income. This made her loved and appreciated by both her husbands and her mother-in-law who said that: “any trade she [Efuru] put her hand to was profitable” (170). This shows that in *Efuru* a woman’s efforts are met with genuine gratitude and acknowledgement.

Furthermore, in her first marriage, it is Efuru who provides for her husband and child. At first, Adizua leaves his farming job and joins Efuru in her trading business; however, he was not good at it. Later on, he completely leaves her to manage everything by herself and is

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content with staying home in laziness while Efuru works in the market, brings money, and takes care of her house. Moreover, in her second marriage, she continues to help her second husband Eneberi in the home expenses. She even provides him with ideas of investments that afterward thrive and assist them in building a house.

Finally, when Efuru is deserted from both her husbands she does not find difficulty in life. She is reliant on her business and her work and does not need a man to provide for her. The success that she received from her work compensated for her loss in her marital life. Thus, Nwapa sets Efuru as an example for all the African women and uses her as a means to show that a woman's economic independence does not restrict her from conducting her duties in her home.

Another example of independence is the character of Ajanupu. She is an educated woman in the traditional sense, but she manages to provide for herself by playing the part of the doctor of the village. Ajanupu has helped Efuru in addition to many other women during their pregnancies and their labors through the use of traditional medicine and herbs. In that sense, she is an embodiment of independence both economically and from the constraints that do not allow women's education and success.

To end, Nwapa manages to give a true portrayal of the Igbo woman in her novel *Efuru* since they actually participated in the economic activities of their society. Despite fact, Achebe still did not assume the importance of women's contribution in his novel *Things Fall Apart*.

3.7 Women as Deities

Religion is an important part of the Igbo culture. In this society, people believe in different deities, gods, and goddesses. To this extent, both Nwapa and Achebe mention several deities in their novels and contribute them to highly regarded roles.

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First of all Nwapa in her novel *Efuru* portrays the goddess of the lake Uhamiri as a representative for independent women. She is regarded as a symbol of prosperity, peace and independence. Uhamiri is used by Nwapa as a way to empower women who suffer from bareness, as she is a childless woman.

On several occasions, Efuru dreams of Uhamiri, and each time she appears in her dreams Efuru feels a sense of security and well-being. Additionally, she grants her wealth. This is seen when Efuru says: “What I have noticed so far each time I dreamt about the woman of the lake was that in the mornings when I went to the market I sold all the things I took to the market” (183).

Moreover, when Efuru becomes the priestess of Uhamiri she finally reaches her ultimate independence and realizes that motherhood and wifehood are not necessarily what a woman should thrive to be. Rather, she sees the light in different things such as wealth and prosperity. Furthermore, Efuru gains the respect and admiration of the people of the village and becomes the role model of women in the Igbo land.

In a similar vein, Achebe surprisingly presents powerful female deities in Umuofia village. Among them is Ani the earth goddess, she is the goddess of fertility and creativity and a festival is held in the village to give thanks to her in chapter five. Also, there is Agbala the oracle of the hills, and caves and many more.

Moreover, the only character in the novel that dares to defy and order Okonkwo is Chielo the powerful priestess of Agbala. In a rare occurrence, Chielo went to Okonkwo’s home and asked that she sees his daughter Enzima. When he refuses to meet her demands she warns him by saying: “Does a man speak when a god speaks? Beware!” (101). This shows that in Achebe’s eyes a woman can be strong and threatening for men, but only if they held a supernatural or sacred power.

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Nevertheless, the portrayal of female deities and priestesses in *Things Fall Apart* is not given much importance as their role in *Efuru*. While Achebe goes beyond his usual representation of females in his novel and describes Chielo as a strong priestess, he does so only occasionally. Thus, he does not give such character the proper portrayal and recognition. On the other hand, Nwapa uses Uhamiri as a symbol of independence and links her with her protagonist's character, and presents her as a role model for all women.

3.8 Nwapa's and Achebe's Writing Style

While writing their novels Achebe and Nwapa pointed their interests in different subject matters and treated them in different ways. Moreover, they focused on the projection of different types of characters which can be clearly spotted in their use of nouns, pronouns, and adjectives.

First, in *Things Fall Apart* it is noticed that Achebe uses the proper nouns of his male characters more frequently than the female characters. As an example, Okonkwo is almost entirely addressed by his full name throughout the novel. However, in several instances the female characters are only addressed in relation to Okonkwo such as his second wife or his daughter.

Second, with a close reading of the novel one may also deduce that the use of certain pronouns overwhelms the use of others. Achebe's use of masculine pronouns such as "*he, his, and him*" is evident while feminine pronouns are not nearly as recurrent.

Moreover, Achebe attributes positive adjectives to the male characters in the novel. He uses for instance the adjective *strong* for Okonkwo and *powerful* to refer to the clan of man in the village. In addition, he uses the adjective *greatest* several times about Okonkwo to emphasize his worth. Contrastingly, he uses adjectives such as *weak* and *fear* to describe the state of Okonkwo's wives.

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On the other hand, Nwapa in *Efuru* makes reference to her female characters more than her male characters. It is noticeable that the protagonist's name Efuru is used all the time and she is always referred to by her name, unlike Achebe who rarely mentions the names of Okonkwo's wives. Besides, Nwapa uses proper nouns to refer to almost all the female characters in the novel, while in *Things Fall Apart* they usually remain nameless. Moreover, she uses the expression *the woman of the lake* frequently instead of Uhamiri to heighten her superiority and strength.

Furthermore, Nwapa's use of personal pronouns is the contrary of Achebe's. She emphasizes the use of feminine pronouns "*she and her*" in order to mark the female presence in the novel. Yet, she uses the pronoun "*him*" several times to avoid mentioning the name of Adizua, she even refers to him sometimes as "*the man*" which shows that she does not attribute importance to masculine characters.

In a similar vein, her use of adjectives is different from Achebe's. For instance, she assigns the adjectives *strong, good, wonderful* and *beautiful* to the female characters especially those of Efuru and Ajanupu. Oppositely, adjectives such as *lazy* are pinned on Adizua which is unusual to attribute to a man.

One of the stylistic techniques of writing that combine many African writers including Achebe and Nwapa is the use of proverbs. These proverbs play a big part in the African oral literature, and thus it is still used by authors in order not only to enhance the beauty of their writing but also to provide a sense of the African culture, especially that of the Igbo in the case of *Things Fall Apart* and *Efuru*.

In *Things Fall Apart* Achebe uses certain proverbs in order to emphasize and give value to manliness. To illustrate: "If a child washed his hands he could eat with kings" (6). This means that a boy's masculinity and strength are what make him a great man. Moreover, he

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highlights this idea further in “a man who pays respect to the great paves way for his own greatness” (14). This shows that the most highly regarded people in Umuofia are the men of the clan, and a person’s greatness depends on the amount of respect they have for them.

Nwapa also uses proverbs in *Efuru*. In an instance, Ajanupu says to Efuru: “An elderly person cannot watch a goat being entrapped and do nothing” (57). Ajanupu says this to Efuru intending to inform her about what her husband Adizua is doing behind her back. Thus, this proverb is used to lay stress on the solidarity among the female characters of the novel.

While both the authors use proverbs and translate them to the English language in order to include parts of their culture in their writings, they still use such proverbs to highlight and emphasize their gender views. To that extent, Nwapa uses proverbs to accord value to women and insist on their unity while Achebe uses them to prioritize men and their masculinity.

Finally, it may be concluded that both Achebe and Nwapa use different linguistic choices in order to highlight their characters and the matters they discuss. For Nwapa, it is a way of empowering her female characters and giving them the credit she believed they deserve. While for Achebe, it is to further impose masculinity in his work and to try to disregard the feminine presence and importance in the novel.

3.9 Conclusion

The Nigerian author Chinua Achebe wrote his novel *Things Fall Apart* in order to change the misrepresentation of Africa in Western countries. He emphasized the Igbo traditions and values and presented strong male characters such as Okonkwo intending to highlight the strength and power of the African man. However, in doing so he failed to give a proper representation of the African woman and the issues she faced. As a further matter, he portrayed his female characters as docile, subservient, and worthless. To this end, Nwapa composed her novel *Efuru* to correct the deceitful depiction of the woman by her male

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counterparts. In this vein, she discusses the troubles that the African woman endured and introduces strong female characters that are able to move beyond the obstacles of society and fulfill happiness and prosperity.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

The African authors had several sources of inspiration they derived from while writing their literary works, starting from national conflicts to cultural values, but most importantly their colonization. For instance, Achebe one of the pioneers of African literature wrote intending to clarify the misrepresentation of Africans in Western literature and to narrate the African's authentic experiences. However, while doing so he twisted the image of the African woman in the same way that Westerners twisted the image of Africa. For this reason, Flora Nwapa emerged to the literary scene and aimed at introducing such issues and presenting the African female in her real image.

The aforementioned authors are both postcolonial Nigerian writers who managed to provide an accurate representation of African society and its cultural norms. Nevertheless, despite their vicinity, they were tremendously divergent. They were able to present incompatible male and female characters who dealt with some of the same issues in disparate ways.

This research analyzed the characters and themes relating to women's issues as represented in *Things Fall Apart* and *Efuru* through a womanist approach. It explored the huge differences between the representation of the male and female characters despite their geographical closeness. Furthermore, it aimed to investigate the writing styles of each author and its contribution to the creation of such differences.

This dissertation sought to explore the importance of the writer's gender in the creation of these contrasting novels and how Nwapa altered the standardized image of her female characters and eventually the African woman. It also sought to inspect the narrative depending on the thematic and stylistic differences. In order to answer these inquiries, it was hypothesized that male authors including Achebe tend to disregard the female roles in their

novels by mainly focusing on the male characters, while female authors do the opposite. It was also assumed that by telling her truth and presenting influential and unconventional female characters Nwapa succeeded in converting the conventional African woman. Moreover, the existence of different themes and writing styles was considered.

Accordingly, the first chapter dealt with the history of feminism and its negligence of the needs of colored women. It introduced the rise of a black women's movement and included a theoretical framework, by providing some definitions to the key concepts of womanism and other African concepts that rooted for gender equality.

The second chapter focused on the major differences between male and female authors. It first provided an overview of the status of women in African society by taking the Igbo culture as an example. Then it explored the two contrasting representations of the African female characters in novels by men and women, especially in African novels. Moreover, it introduced the major differences in writing styles by both genders and the different themes they tackled.

The last and third chapter was devoted to a comparative analysis of the two novels. It analyzed the male and female characters and emphasized the differences between them. It also provided an in-depth analysis of the themes from a womanist perspective. Finally, it presented a comparison between the writing styles of the authors and introduced their differences.

The analysis of the characters revealed that Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* focused solely on his male characters especially Okonkwo and used the remaining female characters as mere accessories to enhance the development of his protagonist. On the other hand, Nwapa emphasized her female characters without entirely putting the male characters on the sideline.

The study showed that despite the novels shared the same traditional setting of the Igbo society; they provided a different representation of its cultural values and norms. Achebe and Nwapa discussed similar experiences but in different ways. For Achebe, his male characters were always right and their actions were inevitably justified. Nwapa simply introduced an unconventional character that does not abide by the social norms nor obey the other males.

Moreover, it discovered that the gender of the authors unconsciously affects their writing styles. Thus, Achebe and Nwapa use different adjectives, adverbs, and even pronouns to emphasize the subject matter or characters being discussed.

Further, the study concluded that Achebe gives this fabricated image of the African woman and the empowering picture of the African man due to his gender bias. In other words, Achebe fails to provide a truthful representation of the African woman in precolonial Igbo land for no other reason than his masculinity. This leaves Nwapa and other African female authors obligated to correct these falsified images and tell their own realities.

The current research work faced many hindrances due to the unavailability of research materials both in libraries and online. The second limitation was the cultural differences since both novels are based in West Africa. Finally, the race differences may have to be an obstacle in understanding the womanist point of view.

At last, a recommendation for further research may lie in the study of the influence of African female writers on the works of male authors. Moreover, a colonial analysis of the two mentioned novels might be valuable. Furthermore, comparative research between two novels written by female authors with contrasting points of view would also be beneficial. Finally, the study of Nwapa's *Efuru* from a male point of view as reinforcing gender segregation would be propitious.

Glossary

Glossary

Androcentric: The placement of men, their viewpoints, and traits at the center of society, while disregarding women.

Feminine Mystique: a phrase coined by Betty Friedan to describe the false idea that was created regarding American women. It advocated that her role was that of a wife and mother and that any aspiration for an academic education or a career would handicap their role in the household.

Heterosexual: The state of being a straight person who is attracted to people from the opposite sex.

Sexism: The discrimination mainly against women is based on the belief in the superiority of men.

Appendices

Appendix A: The writers' biography

Flora Nwapa was born on January 13, 1931. She is a Nigerian author, publisher, and mother of modern African literature since she was the first African female to publish a novel in the English language. She started her literary career with the novel *Efuru* (1966) in which she challenged the stereotypical image of the African woman. Following her first novel, Nwapa was able to publish six novels in addition to several children's books. She died on October 16, 1993, leaving a literary legacy and empowering texts for women behind her.

Chinua Achebe was born on November 16, 1930. He is a Nigerian writer, poet, professor, critic, and one of the pioneers of African modern literature. He started his literary career with the novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) a very famous fictional book that describes the clash between the indigenous people of Africa and the white colonizers. He published two novels in addition to the first which created the African trilogy. Moreover, he published two other novels, several short stories, poetry, critical essays and children's books. He was granted several literary awards, and died on March 21, 2013. His novels are still studied and analyzed to this day.

Appendix B: *Efuru* Plot Summary

The story starts when the protagonist Efuru falls in love with Adizua and decides to escape with him instead of marrying him since he could not afford the price of the dowry. Her father sends men from the village to bring Efuru back. However, when he discovers that she is happy with Adizua he lets her return to the village.

Nevertheless, this happiness does not last when Adizua starts drifting apart from Efuru. She does everything in her power to preserve her marriage; she even takes the responsibility of providing for him and their newborn baby. Unfortunately, her efforts go in vain when Adizua escapes from the village and starts a new life with another woman.

After the departure of her husband, Efuru struggles. She loses her only child to sickness and has to endure the atrocity of the funeral by herself without the support of Adizua who did not even bother to attend. Eventually, Efuru leaves Adizua's house and moves back to her father's house after she lost hope in his return.

Efuru's life does not end with the end of her marriage. Instead, she gets remarried to Gilbert Eneberi an intellectual man. At the start of their marriage Efuru is happy and fulfilled. However, all this changes when she cannot provide him with a child. Efuru suggests to Eneberi that he should get a second wife, but he refuses. Instead, he gets into an affair with a woman who gives birth to a baby that Efuru will end up taking care of. Moreover, he marries another woman and eventually leaves Efuru and his second wife.

Efuru suffers a great deal in that period. She loses her father and Eneberi does not come to the funeral. When he finally reappears he accuses Efuru of adultery because she was sick. The only person who supported her through these miseries is Ajanupu the aunt of her first husband.

In the end, Efuru is cured of her sickness and gets blessed by Uhamiri the goddess of the lake. She devotes her time to her business and worship.

Appendix C: *Things Fall Apart* Plot Summary

The story centers on the protagonist Okonkwo who earned the respect of his tribe by winning a wrestling match against the greatest wrestler of all nine villages. Since then, Okonkwo has become wealthy, married three spouses, and had two yam barns. His success contrasts with the failure of his father who was indebted to the entire village.

Later on, he is chosen by his clan to go to Mbaino and he returns with a boy Ikemefuna and a woman to whom he becomes a guardian. He takes them home with him and does not explain himself to his other wives. Ikemefuna becomes a member of the family and is loved by Okonkwo whom he considers as a father and Nwoye whom he saw as a brother.

During the Week of Peace, Okonkwo beats his wives and gets punished by the clan. He is then informed that Ikemefuna must be killed but is warned not to take part in the killing. However, he kills him despite the clan's warning in fear of looking weak among other villagers. This results in his depression for a long period.

During the funeral of Ezeudu an important leader in the village, Okonkwo accidentally kills his son. Consequently, he was banished with his family from the village for seven years. He moves to his mother's village and receives a great welcome from his uncle. In his second year of exile, he receives the news of the white missionaries who destroyed his village. Not long after the missionaries arrive at his mother's village and start converting villagers to Christianity including his son Nwoye.

The first leader of the missionaries Mr. Brown allowed the villagers to perform their customs, unlike his successor James Smith who was intolerant. The missionary's acts angered the clan's man who burned Smith's church. However, they were captured afterward and put into jail.

When they were released, they held a meeting but were stopped by five missionaries. At this moment, Okonkwo kills their leader expecting his friends to join him. However, they do not want to go to war. Ultimately, when Okonkwo realizes that he has lost everything including his village he hangs himself.

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