

**CANONS OF INDIGENOUS TRADITIONS AND WESTERN VALUES:
THE VOICE OF AFRICAN WOMEN WRITERS.**

BY

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DECLARATION

I declare that “CANONS OF INDIGENOUS TRADITIONS AND WESTERN VALUES: THE VOICE OF AFRICAN WOMEN WRITERS” is my own work, that all the sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references, and that this thesis was not previously submitted by me for a degree at another university.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and strokes, positioned above a horizontal dashed line.

L. L. KWATSHA

DEDICATION

To my loving parents, Phumelele and Phumla, my sisters, Punki and Noluthando, my brother Sonwabile, not forgetting my loving little daughter Onika.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my special gratitude to the following people who helped me to make this study a success. But before I single out each one of them, I would like to thank my Heavenly Father for listening to my prayers.

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To my typist, “Tembi”, I say, without your typing skills my work would not have been as neat and tidy as it is, “Ungadinwa nangomso, MamKhuma”.

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SUMMARY

The study is aimed at analyzing the Canons of Indigenous Traditions and Western Values: The Voices of African Women Writers focusing in different genres written by African women writers with the exception of one book which is entitled *Ikamva Lethu* which is written by a male author. This study examines critically the way African women writers approach the issues that affect their lives, socially, emotionally, psychologically, politically, culturally and personally. This thesis attempts to delve into the reality of the concerns of women in our societies. Our analysis is based on different genres in which every topic is first and foremost being introduced by the responses from different interviewees to prove the relationship between written work and what is happening in our society.

Literature review of other works researching on related issues are given consideration. Biographical details of some African women writers are provided where their background of writing is being pointed out. The term African literature is also given consideration since this study is based on the works of African women writers. A brief account of field research and how the data was collected including the conditions on which the interviews were conducted is also a part of the study.

The theoretical framework where the whole study will be based has been discussed. An acclectical approach has been employed where more than one theory has been dissected. These are the theories that are going to form the base of the study; psychoanalysis where different views from different psychoanalysts such as Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Lacan, Julliet Mitchell will be tested, womanism, which aimed at the unity of blacks everywhere under the enlightened control of men and women, feminism will also form part of our theoretical framework.

The African traditional canons are examined where women writers are voicing out their concerns about African tradition and how women are sometimes being disadvantaged by the tradition. Western values will discuss women as individual rather than as dependent people who cannot reason about their own values instead seeing themselves being forced to accept patriarchy imposed on them. The voice of African women writers will be tested where they show their commitment in their womanhood and they will tell the truth of being a woman. Beyond gender inequality explores the way in which these inequalities are being implemented and how do people and characters respond to them. This leads to the concluding remarks where the assessment of the general overview of the study will be made. The applaud is being given to the women writers who portray the courage of seeing the necessity of putting forward their feelings and how they want the world to view them as women.

KEY TERMS

Psychoanalysis, Feminism, Womanism, Gender, Polygyny, Marriage, Singleness, Patriarchy, Childlessness.

CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION

The introductory chapter will deal with the objectives of this study, research methods and the approach adopted by African women writers in revealing their message. It is also necessary to define African literature as we will be dealing with African women writers. Biographical sketches and the contribution of some of these writers will be included in this chapter in order for readers to know them more fully before readers go deeper into their views. This study will include the views of women from Eastern, Western, Northern and Southern Africa. Their views are common but sometimes they vary because of the influence and different ideologies of the society concerned.

Firstly, it has been observed that there is a woman's cry everywhere: everywhere in the world, a woman's cry is being uttered. The cry may be different, but there is still a certain unity (Mariama Bâ, 1980). This is the voice of African women writers! The nature of this cry (a cry from the heart) and its implications, personal, social, psychological, cultural, political and economic, constitute the principal focus of this study. African women writers have been neglected in the largely male authored journals, critical studies and critical anthologies.

Secondly, the last twenty years or so have seen a tremendous blossoming of greatly accomplished works by African women writers, such as Buchi Emecheta, Flora Nwapa, Dana Minazana, Yoliswa Taleni, Laurette Ngcobo. It would be inexcusable to continue to ignore them. It is also observed that, writing and education go hand in hand and for all kinds of sociological and other reasons the education of women in Africa has lagged far behind that of men.

1.1 PURPOSE OF STUDY

This study will examine the position of women in male controlled institutions. The purpose of this study is to assess the commitment of women writers to the question of womanhood and their reaction to female stereotypes. In this regard we will be interested to find out if only African male writers are guilty of creating and perpetuating the false image of the African woman. Motherhood! What is it? Can we talk of motherhood in relation to African women without men? Do women without men survive in the creative world? Central to the purpose of the study is the re-examination of the role of tradition in the lives of women who populate the world of creative writing. Is Buchi Emecheta's book "Joys of motherhood" a true statement of fact or a bitter, sarcastic indictment of the condition of women turned into baby maker?

It is indeed the aim of this research to watch women characters and grapple with the mechanisms they employ to resist the open but often subtle oppression handed out by their male counterparts.

The issues surrounding polygamy, marriage, love, childlessness, violence (both physical and emotional), harassment (both physical and emotional) underpin the essence of this work.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

In this study primary sources will be significant as there are many references about women and their roles. Interviews will be conducted with a number of African women writers as well as with women in general both young and old, married and unmarried, with men and without men. We shall also interview some Xhosa women writers, but these interviews

were subject to the availability of the authors. This means that field work will form part of this research. A critical analysis of the views of women writers will be made to establish their standpoint in society.

1.3 SCOPE OF STUDY

Selected texts by African women writers will be examined.

Chapter one will introduce the study.

Chapter two will develop a theoretical framework in which an integration of womanism, feminism and psychoanalysis will be attempted. The traditional canons and Western values will be part of this framework. Freud, as Weedon (1987) mentions, developed a theory of gender acquisition which makes gendered subjectivity the key to identity. It accounted for psychic disturbances in later life in terms of problems in the early acquisition of feminine or masculine subjectivity, locating its origin in the psychic structure of sexually acquired behaviour in the early years of childhood.

Kristeva's theory of subjectivity will also play an important role in this study. We will also look at Karen Horney's theory of the psychoanalysis of men, in which she argues the fact that even as Freud asserts that women have penis envy there is also male envy of pregnancy, childbirth and motherhood as well as of the breasts and of the act of suckling, an envy which she claims to have discovered.

Julliet Mitchell(1974) in her work entitled "Feminity, Narrative and Psychoanalysis." states that people have to know where women are, why women have to write the novel. the story of their own domesticity, the story of their own seclusion within the home and the possibilities and impossibilities provided by that seclusion.

Womanists believe that in fighting the establishment, the black woman must not be so mad as to destroy herself with its patriarchy. A womanist vision is racially conscious in its underscoring of the positive aspects of black life. Womanist politics addresses more directly the ultimate question relating to power: how do we share equitably the world's worth and concomitant power among the races and between the sexes (Mitchell,1985:65).

The ultimate aim of womanism is the unity of blacks everywhere under the enlightened control of men and women. Nwapa, as quoted by Perry in Ogunyemi(1985:72) prefers to be called womanist, meaning: a woman who is committed to the survival and wholeness of all people, male and female.

Most womanist literature is culture oriented and abounds in hope. A black woman knows in her subconscious that she must survive because she has people without other resources depending on her, her children. A womanist believes that she is a womanist because of her racial and her sexual predicament. Womanists believe that they must be respected as women. Womanism fits very well into a framework that is basically psychoanalytical because it deals with human behaviour.

Chapter three will examine the African traditional canons. Women writers experience problems where they may not call a spade a spade in writing. It is considered immoral or disloyal to write too much about issues considered to be private. We will also look at the pain suffered by women or wives who cannot have children. This chapter will deal with the mothers in women's literature, " who embody traditional African values in their incomprehension and dismay of their daughters' behaviour." That is, they reinforce the patriarchal values of African society. We will also look at polygamy as one of the features that affect women in traditional African society. Women were not expected to perform well in other matters apart from cooking, sewing, giving birth, childbearing and other so called women's traditional activities.

Chapter four will deal with the Western values in the selected texts by African women writers. When looking at Western values it is discovered that womanism opposes most of the things that will perceive women as an inferior being. It gives them a position in society to prove themselves. It allows them their freedom to act as they want. This means that it trusts their actions and beliefs.

It is believed that man is the enemy, the exploiter and oppressor. In this chapter women will be discussed as independent individuals rather than as kinship appendages. Women will realise their potential happiness rather than accepting their role from patriarchy. We will also look at women reasoning about their own values, rather than fitting into a stereotyped tradition. This chapter will also show that education is the way to promote economic independence in women. African women writers like Buchi Emecheta see education as the way to a job or profession that will enable them to take care of themselves and their children without the help and protection of men. African women writers portray women characters as having the professional and economic means to live without men and they do so in an urban world which will at least accommodate, if not encourage, their single status. These writers are there to articulate the unarticulated consciousness that has traditionally been denigrated in male controlled institutions.

We will examine how women deal with the cross cultural conflict facing them. African women writers show the ability women can display by means of portraying powerful women characters who can stand on their own without the support of men. Nwapa states that the oppression of women starts in the home. In our homes today, we treat girls differently and treat boys as if they are kings. Nwapa continues to say to women that "you are oppressed at home, you are oppressed at work, your husband oppresses you, your employer oppresses you and then your society piles upon you double, if not triple suffering". These women are trying to make their society understand women the way women understand themselves.

Chapter five will explore the voices of African women writers. We need to know the African women writers' views more directly. African women's writers voices are seen through their written work: this also shows their commitment in writing and in their womanhood. Without this commitment their voice would not have been heard. Women's commitments as uttered by Molara Ogundipe - Leslie, are to tell about being a woman, to describe reality from a woman's view, a woman's perspective. In their writing they try to correct the false images of the woman in Africa. In order for them to accomplish this, they must know the truth of the African woman and womanhood. They must tell about being a woman in the real complex sense of the term.

African women writers tell us about the biological phases of womanhood. How do such experiences that affect them, such as menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth and menopause contribute to the woman's personality and the way she behaves in the society she lives in? Their voices will also extend to their commitment as a third world person. This means that they must try to be politically conscious, offering readers perspectives on and perceptions of colonialism, imperialism and neo-colonialism as they affect peoples' ways of living and historical destinies. They are also committed to present man in his totality. Abuse and abandonment will be visited in this chapter.

Chapter six is about gender inequality and chapter seven will serve as a concluding chapter where an evaluation of the study will be made.

1.4 FIELD RESEARCH

At this stage we are going to describe the way in which the field work of this research study was conducted. Different places were visited, in both rural and urban areas. People from various backgrounds were interviewed (both literate and illiterate women). The interview was focussed mainly on different categories of women that is, women without men in the rural and in urban areas, married, educated and uneducated women. Some writers who were available were also interviewed.

The purpose of information collection

Interviews were conducted to authenticate the discussion in this research study. The aim was also to verify what was learnt from the text and to prove that a written text is not an independent entity, it deals with a life situation.

Collection strategies and instruments

Transcribing was used where tape recording was not allowed. In some of the rural areas women were afraid of being taped, thinking that what they said would be used against them. Even if one tried to explain, they were hard nuts to crack. I had to accept the situation. in order to obtain the information that I needed. The group used comprised women of different categories, as indicated above. The interviews were carried out in the following areas: EmaMpondweni, Tsomo, Mount Frere, Lusikisiki, Umtata, Cildarha, Kwelerhana, Thwecu, eQanda, Mkhubiso, East London (Mdantsane), King William's Town (Zwelitsha. Bisho, Dimbaza).

The interviews were conducted in the vernacular and have been translated into colloquial, not standard English. Approximately five women from different families in each rural and urban area were interviewed, although in some places more women made themselves available for interviews. A number of questions asked from the interviewees will appear from the appendix.

Interviews

Interview questions were designed to suit a particular category of women. Some adjustments were made where necessary, in order for people to understand the questions. Questions were asked in Xhosa as most of the participants were Xhosas. In the case where I used other related languages like Bhaca and Isimpondo. I was granted some assistance especially by teachers in that area. Participants were co-operative although some of them, especially illiterate ones, were stubborn here and there.

Ups and down of data collection

It was not easy to understand some of the women's "hlonipha language". The issue of not being able to use a tape recorder in some instances did make my work difficult as it is not easy to transcribe everything a person is saying. In some rural areas even transcribing was not allowed because they thought that I was an informer. Even in those situations I had to be accommodative and simply smile and listen. In cases like these, after the conversation I would find a place where I could sit down and scribble what was said.

Data collected

Some of the responses of the collected data will be reflected in the chapters to follow. Those responses have been sifted and the irrelevant ones have been cut out. In the case of the authors their response will be reflected in chapter five of this study .

Data analysis

This is also reflected after all the interviewees response which are reflected in most of the sub-topic, in the chapters to follow.

1.5 LITERATURE REVIEW

There are other works researching on feminism but their focus is only on Xhosa literature and their main focus is on the image of women in Xhosa literature. This research study is going to go further by looking at the works of women writers from all over the continent, that is from Southern, Western, Eastern and Northern Africa. Their voice will be evaluated together with their concerns in the traditional and western world.

Sokweba in her unpublished honours treatise has written on “The feminist concerns in Xhosa Drama” (1994). Her focus is mainly on the feminist concern about the devaluation of women. Her emphasis is mainly on the Xhosa drama, where she evaluates women characters and the way they are portrayed in the society they live in.

She makes use of Qangule’s “Amaza” (1974) to reveal some of the concerns that she has discovered. She mentions the fact of forced marriage in women, giving the example of Namhla in Qangule’s drama who is totally against the issue of being forced to marry someone she does not love. At the same time Mmango’s “uDike noCikizwa” is also

illustrated to reveal the same thing mentioned above, where Nomazala does not see any reason for Cikizwa to reject Mjongwa, the man her father has chosen for her.

Mtuze in his PhD Dissertation entitled “A feminist critique of the image of women in the prose works of selected Xhosa writers (1909 - 1980)” (1990) points out the images of women as reflected in the works of selected writers from the earliest beginnings of Xhosa literature to the beginning of the eighties. A comparison is drawn between female stereotypes as used by male writers, on the one hand, and female stereotypes as used by females on the other.

Mtuze (1990) also describes the earlier images of female characters where the focus is on the depiction of female characters in the folk tales and on the general interest in female characters in early Xhosa literary works.

Mtuze also looks at the prose fiction of the third and fourth decade and the role of the first two female novelists; during 1930 and 1949 he mentions that interesting feature of this period is the emergence of two female writers, Swaartbooi in 1934 and Futshane in 1939. In this chapter he looks at the position taken by these two pioneering female writers in the depiction of women.

1.6 BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

It is important for us to consider the biographical sketches and contribution of the African women writers that we will be discussing when analysing texts in the heart of this study.

WESTERN AFRICA

FLORA NWAPA

Flora Nwapa was born in Eastern Nigeria in 1931. She has the honour of being a pioneer, as the first African woman writer to publish a novel. In her twenty year long writing career, her many novels reflect changes in Nigerian society, including the Biafran war tragedy and later, the increasing opportunities for urban women to rise in education and in business. She attended Edinburgh University, where she received a diploma in education. She involved herself in teaching, government and publishing work. Her best known novels are "Efuru" (1966) and "Idu" (1969). "This is Lagos and other stories" (1971), "Never again" (1976) "Wives at war and other stories" (1980) and "One is enough" (1981), "Women are different" (1986).

BUCHI EMECHETA

She was born in 1944 in Lagos to parents from Eastern Nigeria, received her education in Lagos up to secondary level and later studied sociology at the University of London. She was the first African writer to address the issue of Feminism overtly. In her writing she made use of her sociological knowledge, that is why she produced writing with the following themes: black oppression in white society, and tradition versus modernity. Emecheta reveals her own life experience fictionally as a foreign wife on the dole in England, describing her status as a second - class citizen, both poor and black. Her later novels, set in Nigeria, continue to stress the inferior status of women there as well. Her contribution includes "In the ditch" (1972), "Second-Class Citizen" (1974), "The Bride Price" (1976), "The Slave Girl" (1977), "The Joys of Motherhood" (1979), "Destination Biafra" (1981), "Nairo Power" (1981), "Double Yoke" (1981) and "The Rape of Shavi" (1986).

AMA ATA AIDOO

Ama Ata Aidoo, author, poet, playwright and short story writer, was borne by Christina Ama Aidoo in Ghana in 1942. She attended school there and was one of the first generation of graduates of the University of Ghana in Legon. She won a prize in a short story competition organized by Ibadan' s Mbari Club, a famous cultural workshop of the early 1960's in Nigeria. She has taught English and African literature in various African and American universities. She is known and admired for her forthrightness and her agonizing over the fate of Africa, past, present and the future. Her contribution includes

“The Dilemma of a Ghost” (1965) and “Anawa” (1969), Short stories, “No Sweetness Here” (1970), a novel, “Our Sister Killjoy” (1977) and a collection of poetry. “Someone Talking to Sometime” (1985)

(Collected from James 1992 and Bruner 1994)

MARIAMA BÂ

Born in Senegal in 1929, she grew up in Senegal, under the care of her maternal grandparents, since her mother had died. She received a French education as her French educated father wanted her to do so. She was also trained at home for a traditional role. “The fact that I went to school didn't dispense me from the domestic duties little girls had to do. I had my turn at cooking and washing up. I learned to do my own laundry and to wield the pestle because, it was feared, you never know what the future might bring”(Bruner 1994). She married and was a teacher in primary school. She had nine children. She wrote some newspaper articles, and was active in several women's organisations, able to influence the progress of a country. In 1980 she received the first Noma award for “So Long a Letter”, judged the best novel in France written outre-mer,

praised both for the excellence of its artistic portrayal and for the important indictment of the fate of contemporary Senegalese women who are partners in a Muslim polygamous marriage. Before her death in 1981 she finished a second novel which deals with mixed marriage in the Senegalese family setting. "Unchant e carlate".

EFUA SUTHERLAND

Born in the Gold Coast (Ghana) in 1924. She is a dramatist and poet, but also a teacher, media producer, founder of a drama workshop and of a writers' circle. Her literary works show the important distinction between literature written for social protest, with a narrow goal of propagandist import, and literature conceived of as balanced art, a meaningful portrayal of life. She has for example, devised children's rhythm plays in Akan and in English for use in grade school impromptu presentations. In her work she accommodates traditional forms and values to change and development. She married an American and with him founded a school upcountry, and an experimental theatre for villages in the central region. After Ghana's independence, Nkrumah honoured her organizational and creative talents. She started the Experimental Theatre, the Ghana Drama Studio, the Osagyfo Players, the Ghana Society of Writers and the Ghana Broadcasting Studio. She also composed literature: the plays "Edufa" and "Foriwa", (1964) a children's play. "Vulture, Vulture and Tahinta" (1968). "The Marriage of Anansewe" (1975). She has also written poetry, short stories and some photo-journalism essays. Her most famous woman writer is Donald Herdeck.

EASTERN AFRICA

MARTHA MVUNGI

Born in Tanzania, she spent her early childhood among the Hehe people, where she first heard the story of "Mwipenza the killer". She is a Bena. She used to listen to her grandmother retelling of folk narratives. She studied at the University of Edinburgh and Dar es Salaam. She became a teacher in Southern Tanzania, and her pupils' participation in 'Story Time' at school inspired her to collect and record folk tales from them and from older people in the village. She has published novels in Swahili, *Hana Hatia* and a collection of her twelve tales, "Three Solid Stones" (1975).

BARBARA KIMENYE

Born in Uganda, she is a writer of tales about Ugandan village life. "Kalasanda" (1965), and "Kalasanda Revisited" (1966). She has written several children's books, "The Smugglers".

SOUTHERN AFRICA

DANA MINAZANA

Was born in Qumbu, the daughter of Percy Dana. She went to Lovedale, and received her Junior Certificate there, then proceeded to Bhencuthi, at Shawbury, where she studied to be a teacher. She has taught in various schools, including Marambeni in Qumbu. Her first book was the novel "Kufundwa ngamava" (learn by experience) (1954). Some of her poems were published in Soya mama's anthology "Indyebo kaXhosa" (the treasure of Xhosa) (1954)

SWAARTBOOI

Born in 1907 and died in 1937. She was born at Ngqamakhwe, and was the second Xhosa woman writer. Her parents were Christians. She attended the Methodist school at Emgcwe (her father was the principal there). In 1924 she went to Mgwali Training School. In 1926, she studied in Healdtown School in Nxukhwebe, and received her junior teacher's certificate. She was on the staff of Mgwali Girls Practising School in 1929, teaching domestic science. She was also active in church affairs. She wrote one novel, "uMandisa" (1935).

HLUMELA MOTHLABANE

She was born to Mr and Mrs DA Sondlo in Queenstown and obtained her lower education there. In 1969 she passed her JC with a first class at Amabhele Secondary School in Alice District, and passed her matric in 1971 in Mount Arthur Girls Institution in Lady Frere. She started teaching in 1975. She obtained a distinction in Modern Poetry in her BA Honours degree. From 1990 until the present she is lecturing at UNISA. Her contributions are "Xola ntandokazi"(1990), "Lihloma libuye lizole"(1992), "Tinkunzi ezimbini"(1994), she also translated Chinua Achebe's "No longer at Ease (Akusekho konwaba)"(1993).

NOLWAZI MBEKENI

Nolwazi Mbekeni was the daughter of Dr Mbekeni of kuTsolo in Transkei and studied at Shawbury kuQumbu in the Transkei. When she started writing "Bhuti Lizo ndixolele" she was in std 10. She drowned in the sea whilst on holiday with her parents.

MIRIAM TLALI

Born in South Africa in 1933, she is the first and so far the only novelist to emerge from Soweto as announced by the International Writing Program. Her novel "Muriel at Metropolitan", written in 1969, was published in South Africa in 1975. She is well known for her column "Soweto speaking" for Staffrider. In 1984 she spent six months in the Netherlands, where Mineke Schipper interviewed her. She had first studied art, then, after winning a scholarship, hoped to study medicine at the University of the Witwatersrand. She studied there for two years, hoping to transfer to medicine, but, discouraged, later entered Roma University where she could take pre-medical training. After a year she had exhausted her funds, so she returned to Johannesburg, obtained a secretarial diploma, and went to work in a store.

BESSIE HEAD

Born in 1934 in South Africa, she emigrated to Botswana when she was in her early twenties. She rejected the legalities and ethics of apartheid that had isolated her white mother. The fact that she had a black father forced her, as a coloured, to be brought up in a foster home, and even restricted her teaching to a segregated school. She left her husband, family, employment and took her only son across the border. Her first novel, "When Rain Clouds Gather" (1968), followed by "Maru" (1971), "A Question of Power" (1973), and her short stories, "The collector of Treasures" (1977). She died in 1986. She was working on an autobiography, and left many sketches and some short stories, published in "Tales of Tenderness and Power" (1989) collected short stories and sketches, "A Woman Alone" (1990), while some of her autobiographical writings are found in "A Gesture of Belonging" (1991.)

YOLISWA TALENI

She is the daughter of Mr and Mrs Mollie and Dickson Taleni. She was born in Korsten Village, Port Elizabeth. She obtained her primary education at Rhabe Primary School in Korsten and her secondary schooling at Healdtown. She obtained her tertiary education at the University of Fort Hare where she gained her BA and UED. She furthered her education at the University of Pretoria where she obtained a further Diploma in Education Management. She taught at Loyiso High School, then at Tamsanqa High School as HOD and returned to Loyiso High School where she was promoted to Deputy Principal and is Acting Principal currently.

Her contributions are “Kulavisa ngothando”(1984), “Nyana nank’unyoko “(1997)and, soon to be published, “Ingomso alikrotywa” and “Mandilothe ndilithezile.”(Collected from “Unwinding Threads” by Bruner, 1994.)

NORTHERN AFRICA

FADMA AMROUCHE

Born in 1882, and died in 1967. She came from a family of Kabyle village folk. She was shunted between cultures, languages, religions, but always found solace in recreating the Berber folk music and tales of her heritage, and in passing it on to her children .

1.7 AFRICAN LITERATURE

As this research involves the work of African women writers, it is important first to look at the term African literature in general. It is difficult to define the term African literature as it is a broad concept but we can explain it as by other scholars have also done.

Irele (1981:11) says:

From the strict scholarly point of view, the term "African literature" must admittedly be considered to be confusing, and this is why it has not been possible to arrive at any satisfactory conclusion.

African literature is the literature in which African writers express their cultural experiences and values to show that they are Africans by naturalization and by assimilation into African culture and its values. African literature constitutes the writer's commitment to his or her society and its well being, and the consequences of such commitment for his or her treatment of the themes.

Heywood (1971:9) asserts that:

... traditional African literature is something which exists in our indigenous languages and which is related to our traditional societies and cultures.

Akyea in his essay, edited by Heywood (1971), states that, "African writing is based on the living heritage as a background to today's events and tomorrow's crises". Selton, quoted by Akyea in Heywood (1971:117), maintains similarly that:

African literature arises from and mirrors the African community and the historical experiences of Africa ... Like other artifacts of a culture, the literary work is not an island into itself, and to study it in isolation can be misleading....

1.8 CONCLUSION

Marriage sub- topic, permeates throughout this study. It appears on the following chapters : chapter 2,3,4, and 6. It may seem as a repetition but it introduces different ideas from each and every chapter. Chapter 2 contains only the theory part and other chapters are based on analysis which is linked to the theory in chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2

DEVELOPING THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As this study will cover the work written by different women writers, and will also focus on theories such as womanism, feminism and gender, it is important to open the discussion with the following quotation:

But if I wish to define
myself, I must first of all
say: I am a woman, on
this truth must be based all
to further discussion

(De Beauvoir 1972:15)

This chapter will develop a framework which will serve as the basis of the study. Due to the fascinating transformation that took place in the world of the seventeenth century and spilled over into the world of literature, authors and critics have attempted to write and discuss new theories such as womanism, feminism and psychoanalysis as theoretical frameworks to be used when analysing literature.

According to Cuddon (1992:341)

A notable by product, so to speak of the whole
movement of feminism and feminist theory and
criticism has been the rediscovery of a hidden

tradition of women's writing and the rediscovery and republication of numerous novels (and other works) by women which have long since sunk more or less without trace except in library catalogues.

Waugh and Rice (1989) and Jefferson and Robey (1986) view literary theory as not a recent phenomenon. Jefferson and Robey stress that philosophers, writers, critics and scholars alike have always been inclined to speculate about the theoretical implications of literary practices, and most literary theories of the twentieth century are conscious of belonging to a tradition that goes back at least as far as Plato and Aristotle. They state further that literary theory is not something that has developed in a vacuum, but has arisen for the most part in response to the problems encountered by readers, critics and scholars in their practical contact with texts.

The theoretical framework envisaged in this study will be eclectic; it will be a synthesis of three closely related but separate approaches to literature. The second half of this chapter looks at canons of tradition and western values with a view to locating them in the broader study.

2.2 PSYCHOANALYSIS

Colliers's Encyclopaedia (1973:450) points out:

Psychoanalysis is the investigation of psychological motivation of human behaviour through the study of mental content by a special technique. It is both a method of treating some mental illness and a system of psychology.

Atkinson et al (1983:497) adds:

The goal of psychoanalysis is to make the individual aware of unconscious conflicts and of the defence mechanism she or he has been using to control anxiety.

We shall briefly look at the theories of the following theorists: Freud, Lacan, Jung, Horney, Erickson, Chodorow.

According to Freud in Mitchell(1985), a little girl behaves differently from a little boy. She makes her judgement and her decision in a flash. She has seen the penis and knows that she is without it and wants to have it. Penis envy, Freud continues, may result in a masculinity complex in which the girl hopes she will one day get a penis, or pretends that she has one and behaves as if she were a man.

Weedon (1987:47-48) remarks that:

Women can never directly exercise the power invested in the position of father because they do not have a penis, and this biological fact has, in Freud, important psychic consequences for feminine subjectivity.

Most commonly in African tradition, old women like to enforce patriarchy upon younger women in their homestead. They perform such an act not because they have developed a masculinity complex or female homosexuality or they envy the penis, but they practise

what was practised towards them by the older women when they were young. They feel that they have the duty of passing cultural practices from generation to generation. Clayton (1989:261-262) on the illustration of "Poppie Nongena" states that:

We don't wear the kopdoeks for pleasure, we are forced to wear them. They are uncomfortably cumbersome if you are not used to them. Furthermore it is the old women who ensure that patriarchal traditions are enforced and reproduced.

The above tone can be interpreted as the tone of an educated or literate woman. Women from rural areas or illiterate women are not forced to wear headscarves on their heads, they wear them with pleasure or with pride because these items identify them as women not as girls. According to these women, kop doeks give them dignity as women and they also serve as a source of respect towards the women's husband's homestead and towards the community. In the case of women who believe in non indigenous values, to be forced to wear headscarves is a torture, especially when one goes to work. But around the home most of these women do wear their head scarves without any complaint.

The elder women in the society are interested in the male sociocultural advantages of displaying their power over the powerless young women or girls.

Miller (1978) believes that as early as 1917, Karen Horney argued against Freud's assumption of the parallel psycho-sexual development of girls and boys, which is distinguished by this different reaction to the absence or presence of a one sidedness in peoples observations, due to their being made from the man's point of view. She suggested that it is possible to substitute for the importance of the penis the by no means negligible physiological superiority of the female capacity for motherhood. This would motivate male

envy of pregnancy, childbirth and motherhood as well as of the breasts and of the act of suckling; which Horney claimed to have discovered in her psychoanalysis of men.

Since males have more social status and power, the penis becomes a symbol for those advantages. The woman does not envy the male anatomy, she envies the male sociocultural advantages. From a traditional point of view, the traditional African woman is seen as a social castrate, a point of view that male counterparts enforce on her. According to the neo-Freudians the adult woman is no longer seen as neurotic because she wants male genitals, she is now seen as neurotic because she rejects her passive, powerless feminine role (Rohrbaugh 1981).

According to Lacan (1977), each person encounters a deep split when she begins to use language. He argue that language is a force which utterly changes the being who uses it and which creates and structures the unconscious. Because language is always metaphorical there is always a gap between expressing a wish and receiving its answer. since language can never fully express exactly what we want. This gap is called desire. The woman is understood, by Lacan, to be desirable to man because of the (false) beliefs that she will be able to complete him, that she is his other (all that he is not), and that union with her is a union with all he is not (Warhol and Herndl 1993).

The symbol most central to desire, for Lacan, is the phallus. Although it bears a connection to the physical penis, Lacan argues (in the essay "The signification of the Phallus") that it did not represent the physical organ itself, but came, metaphorically, to stand for all that was desirable. The origin of this signification is, for Lacan as it was for Freud, the castration complex: the male fears the loss of the penis (loss of social power). the female feels the anxiety of never having had one, and therefore the penis comes to represent what is desirable (social, cultural and economic power).

Carl Jung in Louw & Edwards (1993:586) places little emphasis on biological instincts and gave great importance to spiritual development. He believes that people can continue to grow psychologically and spiritually throughout life. The process of continuing development, which he names individuation, has three important aspects which each person must deal with: the persona, the shadow and the archetypes. Louw and Edwards (1993:586) explain these different stages as follows:

The persona, Jung agreed with Freud that people hide their unacceptable impulses and present a positive, socially acceptable face to the world ... The shadows are those impulses, thoughts and feelings which we do not readily present in public, and which we hide even from ourselves, our secret pride and anger, our jealousy and sexual longings, our secret dreams.

Jung identified two types of archetypes, the anima and animus. According to him all men and women have the potential to develop a full range of masculine and feminine qualities. Within a man, accustomed to being active and strong, lies a hidden tenderness and sensitivity, and the ability to care in a feminine way. To function in his totality he must learn how to express these anima qualities alongside his masculine characteristics. Similarly, each woman has a hidden masculine side, the animus. She has the potential to be forceful, assertive and to assume a position of leadership, for example. As individuation takes place, men and women must meet the challenge of discovering these anima or animus qualities within themselves, and learn how to experience and express them. Morris (1993:2) points out:

Nevertheless, we are all familiar with the idea that a male writer may at times show what are culturally designated “feminine” characteristics in his work, and likewise female writers are sometimes said to have “masculine” traits.

Boulios, a Mexican woman writer, states that all of us are male and female, and we have a male and female part, and when writing a writer can choose to use one of the two, or a combination of the two (Interview by de Beer, 1996:43).

Morris (1993) adds that we cannot assume that all writing by women will be necessarily or essentially “feminine” in its perspectives and values. Even less can we assume that anything and everything written by women will be somehow feminist, that it will share the political assumptions and agenda outlined above.

Jung introduces an archetype called the self archetype. This archetype acts as an inner guide, calling the person forward to new experiences and new discoveries. If we fail to confront our self archetype we will arrest forward progress, feel stuck and frustrated and life will become dull and meaningless.

Women in urban society and some of the African women writers these days confront their self archetype because previously they waited for people (men) to direct them about what to do and where to go and that has led to their frustration and meaningless life in society.

Like Jung, Horney believes that we develop psychologically throughout life. She claims that each person has a real self that provides the energy for continued creative development of the healthy personality. Horney argues, as quoted in the book “Introduction to Psychology” by Louw and Edwards (1993), that people who live according to their real

self, experience feelings and thoughts that are natural and spontaneous, make decisions that give life meaning, and do not blame others when things go wrong, or become critical in a way that undermines the confidence of others. She adds that many people fail to live from this real self. To outward appearances they go about their work and make decisions effectively, but underneath there is a deadness and a despair about finding meaning in life.

In addition, Horney's theory, like Jung's, supports the importance of being true to oneself and if one fails to do so he or she becomes unhappy and alienated and life loses its meaning.

In the society that we live in, men do not live according to their real self; they often undermine the attempts made by women as if they are afraid of being overpowered or that the status given to them by society will be taken away as soon as a woman shows the ability to perform tasks as well as (or better than) a man can do.

Puga, a Mexican woman writer, confirms her real self in this interview by de Beer (1996:41):

At the risk of sounding presumptuous, I do believe that I brought to literature a voice of the independent woman, an "I" who knows she is a woman and does not restrict herself to what is feminine to explore the world and who, at the same time constitutes the perspective of a woman.

I also believe that it is through narrative that women most often become women, but that this process can be fractured through women's self representation. By this I mean a process by which subjects produce themselves as women within particular discursive contexts (Robinson 1991).

Woman accepts her womanhood from the early ages of her life whilst she is still a girl. At the age of six or seven the girl learns that gender and anatomy are unchangeable, that once a girl always a girl. She starts to value femaleness in herself and she knows that to be a female is wonderful.

Horney in Mitchell (1974:127) maintains that:

To identify herself as being a female does not influence future behaviour ... and only that it is best to be female because she herself is female, but that it is best to be female because female is better.

According to Millet in Bryson(1992) the family's main importance is as an agent of socialisation, the primary social institution through which young children learn the values and expectations of their society. Thus it is within the family that boys and girls first encounter patriarchal power and the sexual division of labour, and it is through the example and admonitions from their parents that they are first taught the role, temperament and status appropriate to their sex. Such lessons are reinforced by peer groups, schools and the media, and having been learned at such an early age they are particularly resistant to later challenges.

Freud's ideas of feminine psychology prove that woman's role in life is to stay at home, be passive in relation to man, bear and raise children. Freud's view about women goes hand in hand with what traditional African society expects from its women. African women know what they want to achieve, but it is difficult to put their needs into practice because the picture of womanhood given to her by her society prevents her from finding within herself ways of recognising what it is that she wants. Robinson (1991:77) states that, for Carter, to become woman means to become naturalized into a subordinate position, regardless of one's "official gender".

In the society that we are living in, it is true that women are given subordinate positions but women of today adamantly fight against the subordinate positions given to them by patriarchal society. There are a number of women who are not subordinate, women whose decisions are given favourable consideration not because these decisions stem from them but because they make sense.

According to Morris (1993) women have suffered from a long tradition of what is generally called biological essentialism, that is the belief that a woman's nature is an inevitable consequence of her reproductive role. He adds that if biology were actually to render women more submissive and less adventurous than men there would be little that anyone could do about it.

Because one's way of living and one's way of life is something that is being influenced by one's culture, which is a human creation, women's position in society can be easily reversed by them as it is not nature that put them in an inferior position. So they still have the chance of making their voices heard and respected through their work and the strength that they hold.

Erickson, quoted by Clayton (1989), argues that a woman is predisposed to an inescapable awareness of her inner, creative space which arises from her biological functions as child bearer and which distinguishes her self concept from that of a man. In saying this Erickson is breaking away from Freud's view of women as those human creatures who lack a penis. Erickson suggested that the special voice of womanhood should be listened to, so as to alter society's male direction which is a weak one in the face of the power to choose.

Weisstein's essay, edited by Jones and Olson (1991), posits that, as much as women want to be good scientists or engineers, they want first and foremost to be womanly companions of men and to be mothers. She also argues that mature womanly fulfilment, for Erickson, rests on the fact that a woman's somatic design harbors an "inner space" destined to bear the offspring of chosen men, and with it, a biological, psychological, and ethical commitment to take care of human infancy. Some psychiatrists even see the acceptance of woman's role by women as a solution to social problems.

The world of today has changed and people's commitment to family life is not the same. Some women do not want to be mothers and they do not want to make a family because their focus in life is not based on family life but on their career. You cannot doubt the envy of a family life in women from rural areas or in those who believe in indigenous traditions. But some of those who believe in non indigenous values do not want to make another person happy but to make themselves happy and the values that they believe in allows their husband-less and their childlessness.

Warhol and Herndl (1993:332) explain that:

Irigaray urges women to use their nearness to themselves to develop a closeness to each other, to work together to resist the

oppression which denies them their pleasure
and their language.

Motherhood potentially provides girls or women with “entry” into womanhood.

Motherhood is an expected and normal role for all women. To become a mother is to do what women and those around them expect and want them to do. Motherhood is one of the things women enjoy. It can bring new opportunities into one’s life and having children can bring joy to the mother (Richardson and Robinson 1993).

Let us break the term motherhood into two: unmarried mothers and married mothers. If a girl happens to have a child outside marriage, according to African tradition that person is not a mother to that child. The mothering role is taken over by the girl’s mother and the child will adopt the girl’s family line. In most cases like these, the girl does not enjoy giving birth to a child because sometimes the person who impregnates her does not want to accept the responsibility, or in some cases the girl is still at school so she has to drop out and take care of her pregnancy. Most married mothers do enjoy the birth of a child because they married in order to make a family.

Chodorow’s theory as outlined in “women, culture and society” (by Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974), instead of privileging the oedipus and castration complexes, focuses on the psychic effects of the pre oedipal phase of development and on the quality of the mother daughter relationship. She stresses the fact that women universally are largely responsible for early child care and for (at least) later female socialization. This points to the central importance of the mother daughter relationship for women, and to a focus on the conscious and unconscious effects of early involvement with a female for children of both sexes. The fact

that males and females experience this social environment differently as they grow up. accounts for the development of basic sex differences in personality. Chodorow adds that, mothering involves a woman in a double identification, with her mother and with her child, in which she repeats her own mother-child history.

2.3 WOMANISM

Sanders (1995: 9) defines womanism as follows:

In essence, a womanist is a black feminist who is committed to the survival and wholeness of the entire people, male and female.

Cummings (in Sanders, 1995:59) says:

Womanists are concerned about the entire community and are holistic in approach, which means that both men and women can come together in dialogue to define and address the needs of the African American community.

The womanist view looks at the importance of the positive aspects of black life. They focus on the integrative images of the male and female concepts together. The womanist writer has much more to aim for than mere equality. She has to work on the oneness and togetherness of the black community in order to achieve black dignity, not just looking at her self in isolation.

Ogunyemi (1985:71) observes:

Black womanism is a philosophy that celebrates black roots, giving a balanced presentation of black womandom. It concerns itself as much with the black sexual power tussle as with the world power structure that subjugates black. Its ideal is for black unity where every black person has a modicum of power and so can be a "brother" or a sister or a father or a mother to the other.

The Black American author, Alice Walker, states that the term "womanist" means a woman who is committed to the survival and wholeness of the entire people, male and female(1985).

Ogunyemi (1985:67-71) has this to say:

more often than not, where a white woman writer may be a feminist, a black woman writer is likely to be a "womanist"... The ultimate aim of womanism is the unity of black everywhere under the enlightened control of men and women.

Woman is a female to the extent that she feels herself as such. It is not nature that defines women, it is she who defines herself by dealing with nature on her own account in her emotional life (Mitchell 1974:306).

Looking at the above words by Mitchell, it is clear that a woman does not necessarily feel herself as a female, she rather feels herself as a person and as a human being. To feel herself as a female, not as a person, will drive her to accept the role that she is going to be given by society as a woman. This does not mean she is ashamed of her femaleness or her womanness but by saying she is a person she makes her whole self part of society. But if she identifies herself according to gender she will be looked on only as a woman by society. It is society and culture that defines women and give them their roles to play in the society. If women have a chance to define themselves they will take that opportunity to show the world that they are also people, like any other human being that lives on this earth. Women, especially illiterate women, take societal and cultural practice so intensely that they think it is the way it should be. But women who believes in non- indigenous values they know that they can act in a way that is comfortable for them, not according to the oppressive societal expectations of women.

Mexican woman writer Mastretta, in her interview with de Beer (1996:213), portrays a womanist point of view when she says:

... I want to write for women and also for men,
and that I want to write like a woman but also
like a writer, and I want to be considered a
writer and not specifically or exclusively a
woman writer. I want to write so that when
they speak of Mexican literature in general
I will be included in it, and not only when

they speak of Mexican literature written by women.

Alice Walker in Ogunyemi (1985:12) derived the term womanism from Black woman folk culture and highlights the commitment to the survival of all Black folks . male and female. She defines womanism thus:

A Black feminist or a feminist of colour...
 who loves other women, sexually and or
 sexually appreciates and prefers women's
 culture ... committed to survival and
 wholeness of entire people, male and female...
 womanist is feminist as purple is to lavender.

The above quotation by Alice Walker indicates that womanism is not a men hating ideology. but women want to see unity among the Blacks every where, this includes both male and female. They embrace racial, gender, class and culture consciousness .Black women are facing so many challenges in their lives. They are facing dehumanization resulting from racism and poverty whereas their White counterpart are only protesting against sexism and most of all patriarchy. Ogunyemi (1985:68) supports this by saying :

The politics of the womanist is unique
 in its racial-sexual ramifications. It is more complex
 than White sexual politics, for it addressed more directly
 the ultimate question relating to power: how do we share
 equitably the worlds wealth and concomitant power
 among the races and between the sexes?

The term patriarchy has been abused to put women down. This has manipulated women in such a way that they can be looked down and be seen as people with no future so that they can feel inferior in life. But above all, these women they have recognised that they need to unite with men in order to fight or reject racism and imperialist subjugation. African women receive a multiple burden as compared to their male counterparts.

The migrant labour law is one of the apartheid laws that was imposed to the Africans to undermine their family structure. Wives were left behind by their husbands to look after the family including children. This was a very hard thing for these women because they had nothing to keep their families going except to work hard for their survival. In the meantime their husbands were roaming the streets of the cities searching for jobs. This separation of families resulted in a high rate of single parent families because some of the husbands start new families and forget about their families back home.

Black women are committed to improve the quality of life for her household and that of the nation. As a wife she needs to support her husband economically, physically and socially. An African woman is prepared to do anything to act against family disruption because they view family as the nucleus of social development and as well as cultural continuity. Most African women are hoping to see the world where inequality based on gender, class and race is absent from every country.

Womanism needs to seek genuine liberation of the African woman which involves probing African woman which involves probing African culture, values, tradition and understand the real location of the woman. African women manage to make history for themselves through their traditional roles.

2.4 FEMINISM

Humm (1992:1) defines feminism as follows:

Feminism is a belief in sexual equality combined with a commitment to eradicate sexist domination and to transform society.

Jefferson and Robey (1990:204) agree with Belsey and Moore (1989:117), as they define feminism as:

The word feminist or feminism are political labels indicating support for the aims of the new women's movement which emerged in the late 1960's.

They further their argument by saying:

Feminist criticism is a specific kind of political discourse: a critical and theoretical practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism, not simply a concern for gender literature.

Feminism is a socio-political reality, a struggle and commitment by women. It includes their experience as its material and its energy, producing knowledge of it for action and for change.

Jordine & Smith (1989) and Humm (1992:1) are of the view that:

Feminism is a belief in sexual equality combined with a commitment to eradicate sexist domination and to transform society.

Humm (1995:94) modifies her earlier definition by adding that:

The ideology of women's liberation, intrinsic in all its approaches is the belief that women suffer injustice because of their sex.

Morris (1993:1) likewise defines feminism as follows:

... it is a political perception based on two fundamental premises: (1) that gender difference is the foundation of a structural inequality between women and men, of which women suffer systematic social injustice, and (2) that the inequality between the sexes is not the result of biological necessity but is produced by the cultural construction of gender differences.

Weintraub in her essay "The brain", edited by Jones and Olson (1991), posits that feminists stress that it is society, not nature, that gives men the drive to dominate and keeps women from achieving careers and power. Rosaldo and Lamphere (1974:73) argue thus:

Women's pan - cultural second class status could be accounted for, quite simply, by postulating that women are being identified or symbolically associated with nature, as opposed to men, who are identified with culture... if women were considered part of nature, then culture would find it natural to subordinate, not to say oppress, them.

Adams (in Jones and Olson 1991:4) pointed out that:

The basic tendency of the human fetus is to develop as a female. If the genes order the gonads to become testicles and put out the male hormone androgen, the embryo will turn into a boy, otherwise it becomes a girl: you have to add something to get a male nature's first intention is to create a female.

From above quotation one notices that nature itself prefers women but society and culture prefer men. This is why it is believed that any differences, other than anatomical, are a result of conditioning by society.

According to Cuddon (1992) a feminist questions the long-standing, dominant, male, phallogocentric ideologies, patriarchal attitudes and male interpretations in literature.

Feminism attacks male notions of value in literature by offering critiques of male authors and representations of women in literature and also by privileging women and how women feel, act and think, or are supposed to feel, act and think, and how in general they respond to life and living. It thus questions numerous prejudices and assumptions about women made by male writers, not least any tendency to cast women in stock character.

Deimar edited by Herrmann & Stewart (1994:5) assert that:

Many would agree that at the very least a feminist is someone who holds that women suffer discrimination because of their sex, that they have specific needs which remain negated and unsatisfied, and that the satisfaction of these needs would require a radical change (some would say a revolution even) in the social, economic and political order.

Looking at the above explanation we have noticed that feminism supports the idea that women should have the same rights and chances as men.

2.5 FEMINISM AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

It is important to consider what feminism and psychoanalysis would have in common. Gallop, edited by Brennan (1989), discovered a common factor between feminism and psychoanalysis. He states that feminist studies or women's studies or gender studies are interdisciplinary, they span the humanities and the social scene and cross into the natural sciences where they go as far as biology. Gallop has also noticed in Mitchell's work (1977) that she also sees psychoanalysis as the discipline that will always be part of the humanities, since it is about the human being within human culture.

Mitchell (1974) also posits that Freud's analysis of the psychology of women takes place within a concept that is neither socially nor biologically dualistic.

Bowlby edited by Brennan (1989:44) adds that:

Feminism cannot do without a psychoanalysis
which is yet something other than it and the same
would be true the other way round.

Since 1970 considerable attention has been paid by feminist theorists to psychoanalytic models of sexualities and subjectivity. Influenced by Freud and by the French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan, many feminists have attempted to make psychoanalytic theory the key to understanding the acquisition of gender subjectivity, either by accepting the terms of Freudian discourse, or by advocating psychoanalytical theory as a way of understanding the structures of femininity and masculinity under patriarchy, together with the social and cultural forms to which these structures give rise (Weedon, 1987).

A Freudian model of psychosexual development has been taken up by recent feminist writing as a way to understand female sexuality.

Weedon (1987:46) states that :

Feminists who use psychoanalytic theory in their analysis argue that, in accepting the Freudian model, they are not endorsing patriarchal forms of heterosexuality and the nuclear family but the preconsciousness of sexual identity which underlines those

structures and which could easily take another non repressive form.

Women are considered by Freud as human beings who are likely to have a weaker superego than men and they (women) are excluded from the values of the superego. Men are considered to have a strong superego because Freud himself put more value on men's sexuality than on women's. He devalues the womanhood of women and accords all the status to men because he himself is a man. He sees perfection in himself and attributes all that personal perfection to all men around the world and makes that a way of life. If individual sees the other as having a lesser or weaker superego it is because that person does not act according to his expectations. Even women have the right of labelling men as having a lower superego standards; as men do not want to fit or accept the change with the times, they cling to the tradition that always gives credit to them and oppress women.

Mitchell (1974) cites Freud: that if the woman's masculine traits become unsuppressed the woman is liable to become neurotic, frigid, thoroughly dangerous to her husband, and might try to compete with males in intellectual pursuits. It is difficult for a person to suppress something that is part of her, if we remember that it is quite clear, according to Carl Jung, that every human being has the traits of the opposite sex in him or her. Freud seems as if he knows very clearly that women have the same potential as any other person: or he knows that women have the potential of winning. Freud fears that women will show their capability and it is possible that it could be greater than that of men. Men's fear of being overshadowed by women leads to their oppression.

2.6 FEMINISM AND WOMANISM

Feminism and womanism are two disciplines that are related but partly different. Feminism is found in Western and African forms, which have different beliefs and ideologies. African feminism and womanism complement each other because they have related and similar ideas. When we talk about western feminism we refer to feminists who attack male notions of value in literature and hold that women suffer discrimination because of their sex as indicated above under the topic "FEMINISM". Western feminism also focuses on equality between men and women and it also excludes men, who are viewed as the enemy and the oppressor.

Davies and Graves (1986) posit that womanism is inextricably entwined in the definition of African feminism. They further maintain that a womanist in part, is a black feminist or feminist of colour committed to the survival and the wholeness of all people, male and female.

The difference between African feminism, womanism and Western feminism is that African feminism and womanism look at men as also exploited, but in a different way to women. Mugo edited by Davies and Graves (1986:11), in her 1976 interview, comments on the interconnectedness of race, class and sex oppression that:

First of all, let me note that we cannot only speak of women's oppression by men. In capitalist system, women tend to be exploited by the very nature of the society, particularly

the working and peasant women, just as men are exploited. The difference is that women are hit particularly hard. Their most obvious hardship is being educationally disadvantaged.

African feminism, like womanism, sees the struggle for equal rights between the sexes as more difficult than that of decolonization because it is the struggle between husband and wife, brother and sisters, father and mother. African feminism can therefore be summarized as follows: firstly, it recognizes a common struggle with African men for the removal of the yokes of foreign domination and European American exploitation. It is not antagonistic to African men but it challenges them to be aware of certain salient aspects of women's subjugation which differ from the generalized oppression of all African peoples (Davies and Groves 1986).

The connection of African feminism and womanism with western feminism is that they identify gender specific issues and recognise woman's position internationally as second class status and otherness and seek to correct that. In the second phase of this chapter, we will be looking at canons of African traditions.

2.7 CANONS OF AFRICAN TRADITIONS

2.7.1 Housework and house service

Most traditional African women, who are wives and mothers at the same time, are sincere about their housewifely duties. They don't even feel the "housewife" syndrome, a vague malaise associated with loneliness and boredom. But not all full time housewives enjoy this syndrome. Some women work out of financial need to relieve themselves of the loneliness and boredom of the syndrome, or they enjoy working.

Robinson et al (1977), quoted by Rohrbaugh (1981:80), assert that:

... housework is for women only. Regardless of how busy his wife may be with a paid job, the husband rarely takes on any of the household chores.

A housewife is the person, other than a domestic servant, who is responsible for most of the household duties. She may be married or not, and she may or may not have a job outside the home. Housework is described as a never ending job. Housework is not a single activity. It is a collection of heterogeneous tasks which demand a variety of skills and kinds of action Oakley (1985).

To be a mother and a wife and to work at the same time is not an easy job. But some women who belong to this category show commitment to their responsibilities. Johnson and Johnson (1977), quoted by Rohrbaugh (1981:184-185), elaborate as follows:

My family comes first ... If family crises and job crises occur simultaneously, the family takes precedence. When a child is sick, for instance, the mother missed work (not the father)... The wife limits career ambitions and commitment to fit in the family situation....

Puga, a Mexican woman writer, in her interview with de Beer (1996:37) posits that:

I get up, cook, make the bed, clean and then return to my writing. One's daily chores are very much intertwined with reading and writing.

Gilman edited by Jones and Olson (1991) explains that the labour of women in the house certainly enables men to produce more wealth than they otherwise could, and in this way women are economic factors in society. The woman works harder, labouring life long in the service, not of her children only, but also of men, husbands, brothers, fathers, whatever male relatives she has.

She continues, adding that, it is not motherhood that keeps the housewife on her feet from dawn till dark, it is house service, not child service. Women work longer and harder than most men, and not solely in material duties. Many mothers, even now, are wage earners for the family as well as bearers and rearers of it.

Rosenthal, a Russian woman writer, in her essay edited by Toby et al (1994:152), says:

“woman's work” was directed towards helping others.

For Bryson (1992) the role of the housewife is as strategically important as that of the factory worker, and the home itself can be seen as a site of anti capitalist struggle. For woman is the slave of a wage slave, and her slavery ensures the slavery of her man. He further argues that for women to be freed from domestic tyranny they need access to education and employment, so that economic need would not force them into marriage: they also need the full protection of the law and this include political rights.

Women are seen as human beings with a triple role to perform in their lives. They are also seen as “home makers”. Their work includes “reproduction work” such as childbearing and rearing responsibilities. Because reproductive work is not “real” work, women rarely rest except at night. Consequently, in most societies women tend to work longer hours than men. Not only are they the first to get up to prepare the household for the working day, but also the last to go to sleep. The role of women also includes productive work, whereby they are also income earners. In rural areas they achieve this role in terms of agricultural work. Moser (1993) maintains that women as domestic labourers rarely find time for leisure because caring for young children is without beginning or end. Their last role as mentioned by Moser (1993) is that of community managing and community politics. It comprises activities undertaken primarily by women at the community level, as an extension of their reproductive role. This is a voluntary unpaid work, undertaken during their free time.

Bryson (1992:236) states that:

... Marx and Engels did say that reproduction
as well as production was a part of the material
basis of society.

Women display resistance under difficult conditions. In most cultures women’s efforts are discounted and while the males’ efforts are seen as achievements and they can be rewarded. If a woman performs the same activity that the male does, the male will be rewarded and the woman will be discouraged. Mead (1974) elaborates that when men cook, cooking is viewed as an important activity; when women cook it is just a household chore.

Today, when the majority of married women are employed, they spend less time rearing children than they did a century ago, but the idea persists that a woman's purpose in life is to care for home, husband and children (Richardson and Robinson 1993). Black women perceive staying home with the children as a privilege, not a restriction. Hare and Hare (1970:66) posits that:

Thus the burden of the family seems to fall
upon the black woman, in her view, at the
same time as she is told that the man should
be superior and that she must play second fiddle.

Clayton (1989:284) quote the voice of Tlali: to say woman is to say pot, to say woman is to say broom.

In the preface by Jones and Olson (1991) they explain that according to a Pakistani proverb, woman's place is in the home or the grave. A similar North American saying decrees that a woman should be kept barefoot, pregnant and in the kitchen.

Nurturance, patience and the rest are not valued (or paid) because it is considered "only natural" that women should care, selflessly and unconditionally, not only for children, but for adult men also. Because this nurturing is considered to be an intrinsic part of women's "nature", it is not defined as work at all, but as a labour of love (Lawler in Cosslett et al 1996).

Love is the context of our patriarchal culture, it is synonymous with a kind of submissive, ego -boosting behaviour which women are expected to show men, but not vice versa.

Thus Firestone (1979:121) argues that:

Love, perhaps even more than child bearing, is the pivot of women's oppression today and that love in a patriarchal society cannot be based upon equality, but reflects women's economic and social dependency and ensures that they will not challenge their subordinate position, although expressed very differently, this claim is remarkably similar to the analyses of Thompson and J.S. Mill who had argued a century earlier that men were not content with women's obedience, but demand their love as well.

How is this love being portrayed in marriage?

2.7.2 Polygyny

Polygyny is in contrast with the term polyandry which refers to the marrying of two or more husbands to one wife (Hayakawa,1981:440). Dixon (1996), an African American woman, perceives polygamy as an alternative for those women who do not have men in their lives or for those women who are not married. She defines polygamy as the condition or practice of having more than one wife a single time.

Mbiti (1969) contends that polygamy primarily has to do with the importance of immortality among African people. According to him, longevity is extremely important. In this regard, offspring prolongs one's life through the elaborate system of ancestry. Since one remains alive as long as he or she is remembered among their descendants, it is

important to have many children. The more children, the greater the probability of being remembered. Polygamy increases the number of children, thereby ensuring immortality for oneself and one's family.

In a polygamous marriage, Beattie (1964) remarks, that an effect of polygyny is to see that all the women in a community can be married and so materially provided for. A man with several wives can reasonably hope to have more children than a man with only one. In other societies there is what is called a widow inheritance, where a widow is taken over by one of the dead brothers and of her dead husband his wife.

It is also believed that when one has co-wives they can help each other with the household chores and child rearing. Women were the people who insisted that their husbands should have co-wives to assist them with domestic work and other related work.

Lee (1982) also notes that women desire co-wives because it increases the production of the family, thereby increasing the overall status of the family. Dixon (1996) maintains that polygynous relationships may be especially advantageous for single woman who experience depression and other psychological and emotional problems stemming from loneliness and isolation. As demonstrated above, polygynous arrangements can provide companionship, and for those who enter into relationships with males who already have a wife and children, a sense of belonging to a larger family group.

The other major factors polygamy is when a woman is unable to have children.

2.7.3 Childlessness

Even if women do not become mothers, Rich (1977) argues, they cannot escape the oppressiveness of the institution of motherhood; for Rich, all women are defined either as “mothers” or as “not mothers”. If women do not bear children, then their “childlessness” is what defines them. Historically, cross culturally, a woman’s status as child bearer has been the test of her womanhood. Even by default motherhood has been an enforced identity for women, while the phrases childless man and non-father sound absurd and irrelevant to us. In African culture barrenness is perhaps the worst affliction (even crime) a couple can endure (or commit), and it is almost always attributed to the woman. In traditional society for a woman to lack reproductive power is to lack all power, indeed to be deprived of her very identity in life.

If it happens that a woman manages to have children, a father prefers a son. If a woman gave birth to a girl in an African traditional society she could be hounded out of marriage, especially if this was the second time she gave birth to a girl.

2.7.4 Value for sons

In most places society dictates that the male is the more valued child. there is an anger at a culture that values its male children above its female ones. Brown- Guillory (1996:163) asserts that:

A daughter is raised by a mother to be a nurturing and caring person. The daughter is taught to care for others in the family and to believe in the ultimate value of the family ... favouritism to the son damages not only the daughter but also society.

The division made by mothers between their children of different sexes affects their daughters' womanhood. They become man's dependant, if not his slave, because from their childhood they have never shared the world in equality. In other cultures, to give birth to a girl is the start of marriage problems. For instance in India, Mohanrom in her essay in Brown-Guillory (1996) argues that the misogyny and devaluation of daughters lead mothers in India to hope for a boy when they are pregnant because girl babies do not strengthen or enhance their lineage, they merely function as objects of patronymic exchange. A female child does not contribute to securing power for the maternal position. In Indian culture a woman brings honour and power to her family when she gives birth to a boy.

The mothers in an Indian community teach their daughters how to bend properly in order to serve their men and be content with women's fate.

The Olinkan mothers also see a need for their daughters to be silent, as they perceive silence as the first step on the path to becoming a woman in their culture. Brown- Guillory (1996:6) explains that:

They are taught that pain is not to be given
a voice, which often results in insanity.
Those who can withstand pain go on to teach
their daughter to work hard, produce children,
and endure pain.

African mothers, taking traditional Xhosa customs as the norm, do prepare their daughters to bring a good "lobola". They teach them how to do house work and to work in the fields. They also show them how to dress as women and they teach them to show respect to any male person in the society. Urban Xhosa mothers care for their child's education and her career success in life, academically and otherwise.

Daughters of Olinkan society and those of traditional Xhosa society undergo circumcision in order to be seen as a complete woman. This is a tradition that needs to be passed by mothers to their daughters, if she is to be a good mother in that cultural society. Nwapa in her interview by James (1990:113) states:

The oppression of women starts in the home.
In our homes today, we treat girls differently,
and we treat boys as if they are kings.

While black women are affected by the social construction of sexual identity, they are equally affected by African traditions which relegate women to inferior status, and which demand fertility and respect for the extended family (Clayton 1989:4).

According to Brown-Guillory (1996), the very least a mother who has produced a daughter can do is to make the girl fit enough to obtain a healthy bride price. Women who have many daughters console and congratulate themselves in terms of the expensive bride prices these daughters might bring. He further argues that a woman's body is the only value she retains, chiefly in the hopes that it will bear sons whom it can cook for and otherwise cater to, as it does for the adult men in the economic and political interests of its current owner.

Like Nancy Chodorow in America and Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray in Europe, Emecheta responds to patriarchy's psychic and societal repression of women as the reign of the phallic order which disconnects woman from her material being except to serve the basic reproductive needs of the culture and the economic and narcissistic needs of the male.

Simone de Beauvoir, as mentioned by Jones and Olson (1991), suggests that what leads to women's oppression is that women are defined as "other" in contradiction to men; who represent the norm, women embody the variance from the norm.

Sayers, as quoted by Jones and Olson (1991), claims that women have too long suffered the indignities of classification. She argues that the time has come to admit women to the human race but not as a class or a group. She adds that a woman is just as much an ordinary human being as a man, with the same individual preferences, and with just as much right to the tastes and preferences of an individual.

There is a vital need for black men and black women to work together because we cannot have liberation for half a race.

Mill in her essay, edited by Jones and Olson (1991:202), states that:

...All women are brought up from the very earliest years in the belief that their ideal of character is the very opposite to that of men, not self will, and government by self control, but submission, and yielding to the control of others...

Women in the Third World countries have needs and problems but few if any have choices or the freedom to act. Mitchell (1974:306) posits that:

If another person blocks and refuses the freedom of others, that constitutes oppression. Woman is the supreme other, against which man defines himself as subject, not in reciprocity, which would mean that he in turn was object for the woman's subject-hood, but in an act of psychic oppression.

In the Russian literature written by women it is mentioned that histories of the women's movement in nineteenth century Russia focus primarily on three issues: on women's emancipation from familial despotism, on women's aspirations to education and on their desire for work and economic autonomy. It is also stated that Russian women are denied by law and custom the basic freedom to organize their life as they choose. Hohanty et al (1991:56) observes that:

... women are characterized as a singular group on the basis of a shared oppression. What binds women together is a sociological notion of the Sameness of their oppression.

Women's oppression continues when she loses her husband even if she is not supposed to be treated oppressively, but in most cases the in-laws make it a point that she feels the mourning period up to the end.

2.7.5 Mourning & Widows

Emecheta, in her interview with James (1990:36), asserts that:

... take the case of when a woman loses her husband, she is supposed to mourn for nine months, like a crazy woman she won't have a bath for nine months. When anybody suggests changing that, our women don't like it. Women who have gone through it insist that their daughters in law mourn for nine months as they have done.

After the mourning process the woman has to remarry. Remarriage was encouraged by custom and folk proverbs. But since widows inherit their husband's property, there was a considerable restriction placed on whom they could marry. The primary interest was in retaining the land in the family and thus male elders retain the custom by forcing them to remarry within the family. Widows tried to challenge the patriarchal custom but the colonial state sanctified it by depending on the general code of tribal customs. The state consulted with the village headsmen of each landowning tribe in the district because they knew that they were the most influential and trusted people in the village. Clayton (1989:3) says that:

In our society, the preferred unit is the heterosexually committed couple who is assumed to have children ... This unit works to the absolute disadvantage of women. They are never individuals in their own right in social policy. They are not entitled to benefits in their own right as individuals, but only as dependants of men. or as women who have lost the support of men.

Head comments, in the essay edited by Eagleton (1996), upon the tremendous sense of deprivation, amounting virtually to a conviction that personal identity is at stake, when a colonised person grows up without a history, or with a distorted one. In her conceptual and moral world, women may be a powerful protagonist, but they are never allocated the power to change history which she imparts to her favoured men.

Miller (1978) argues that women's oppression by men in patriarchal societies can be regarded as a source of potential strength and power for women rather than merely as a source of weakness. Women's names play a vital role in their lives in both African traditional society and in the western world.

The last part of our discussion shows how western values can have influence on the African people.

2.8 WESTERN VALUES

2.8.1 Monogamy

According to Hohanty et al (1991), women are not subordinate because of the fact of exchange, but because of the modes of exchange instituted, and the values attached to these modes.

Cutrufelli in Hohanty et al (1991) maintains that the effect of European colonization has changed the whole marriage system. Now the young man is entitled to take his wife away from her people in return for money. Women have now lost the protection of tribal laws.

Parkin and Nyamwaya (1987:173) comment:

Thus it will be further argued that monetisation of lobola not only erodes a woman's economic position but also destroys the support and legitimisation that come from lobola payment in cattle.

Marriage is viewed as the woman's proper sphere, her divinely ordered place, her natural end. It is also seen as what she is born for, her means of honourable livelihood and advancement. But she must not even look as if she wants it. She must not turn her hand over to get it. She must sit passively as the seasons go by, and her chances lessen with each year. It is African tradition which views marriage as a woman's end. Even women who belong to this category, when they reach a certain stage their parents see to it that they are married.

Marriage is a form of sex union recognized and sanctioned by society. It is a relation between two or more persons, according to the custom of the country, and involves mutual obligations. Although made an economic relation, it is not essentially so, and will exist in a much higher fulfilment after the economic phase it has outgrown (Jones and Olson 1991).

Beattie (1964:117) explains that:

Marriage is almost always more than simply a legalized sexual union between a man and a woman,...marriage is a union between a man and a woman such that the children born to the woman are the recognized legitimate offspring of both parents.

Some women do enter into polygamous marriages because of their advantages: men who require more than one wife are known as wealthy men.

2.8.2 Singleness

Some women who stay without men (single women) prefer not to make somebody else, but to make themselves. Stegeman (1974:17) contends that:

the new woman represents a theory of personhood where the individual exists as an independent entity rather than her kinship relations, where she has a responsibility to realize her potential for happiness rather than to accept her role, where she has indefinable value rather than quantitative financial worth, and where she must reason about her own values rather than fit in stereotyped tradition.

However, the concept of singleness is deceptively simple. Sometimes it is used to refer to the never married, at other times it is used as a residual category so that it also includes the divorced separated and the widowed.

Singleness is still devalued and considered a personal failure. Stereotypes of single women are couched in pathological terms, such as lack of sexual attractiveness, or the inability to form an intimate relationship with another person (O'Connor 1992).

The roots of women being without men are embedded in those powerful emotions of early childhood which form a basic pattern and structure for the individual's total life. For most, this specific problem represents a direct expression of early fantasies and emotional conflicts. Robert (1966:81) states of the single mother that:

Clearly she is a human being who like all other human beings responds dynamically to her particular life situation, but, also clearly, she chooses one common and specific response, having an out of wedlock child.

Nwapa, in her interview with James (1990:114-115), when she was asked about any particular message in her work responds as follows:

I think the message is, and it has always been, that whatever happens in a woman's life... marriage is not the end of this world, childlessness is not the end of everything. You must survive one way or the other, and there are a hundred and one other things to make you happy apart from marriage and children.

Some women choose to live without men meaning they stay single. They decide against marriage for several reasons. These women see the uniqueness in singlehood because it allows them their freedom to take decisions on their own. To them it is better to stay single and have children than to marry, only divorce. Rohrbaugh (1981:197) says:

... But women report that the children provide companionship and sense of family... These women felt that they made the excellent choices for their lives and they are doing what they want at their own pace at their own time.

Some commentators see single parenthood as a serious problem for society. The children suffer by lacking one parent. Cashmore, quoted by Haralambos (1993), argues that it is often preferable for a child to live with one caring parent than with one caring and one uncaring parent, particularly if the parents are constantly quarrelling and the marriage has all but broken down.

Clyman et al (1994) in their Introduction point out that the image of women in Russian literature over the centuries is that a major female character is not a widow. She is either single, left alone while her husband is in battle, or clearly the dominant spouse in the marriage. They further maintain that this pattern suggests that women without men were more likely to command narrative attention in old Russian literature, perhaps because in such circumstances women's freedom of action was greater.

Dixon (1996:70) reveals that:

... The prospects of finding a male are so hopeless, some are opting to go it alone, while others are settling upon the notion that they may have to spend their entire lives in the words of one respondent, manless.

“Single people often turn to their friends in order to resist their pain” (my emphasis).

2.8.3 Women and Friendship

Women's friendships or relationships are one of the healing relationships amongst women, especially for those who have problems in their lives. By sharing their experiences they are showing a sisterhood to each other. As they are sharing these experiences one will discover that she is not the only one who has such hiccups in life. Coates (1996:16) argues that:

Women friends have gone through similar experiences, and have grown as people as a result of these experiences, and that this sense of shared experience and shared development is absent from even the most intimate relationships with men.

The importance and the strength of friendship between women is also demonstrated by Whitney Houston's song entitled "count on me" when she says:

Count on me through thick and thin, a friendship
that will never end. When you are weak I will be
strong helping you to carry on, call on me I will be
there, don't be afraid so please believe me when
I say count on me...

(Waiting to
Exhale.1996)

Most women believe that whatever bad things have happened with lovers and husbands, continuity and security have been built on the excellence of women's friendship. Coates (1996) states that a female relationship has as much or more to offer as a fulfilling relationship with men.

A number of women have split their intimate life in two, having an intimate sexual relationship with one man, while having an intimate emotional relationship with one or more women.

Far from being relationships that perpetuate the status quo, friendships between women are potentially liberating and many twentieth century women writers argue that female friendship can be a form of resistance (Coates: 1996).

Talking is the substance of women's friendship: they talk about people, their experiences in their lives, and they receive satisfaction and support through the conversation.

2.8.4 Women and Resistance

The most effective resistance of women in South Africa was their anti-pass campaign. Walker (1991) states that influx control and passes had long been crucial mechanisms of state control over the African population. Women decided therefore to form some organisations for the purpose of uniting them in common action for the removal of all political, legal, economic and social disabilities.

The mood in these women's meetings was militant and they were not even frightened by intimidation. They were prepared to fight the pass laws until the victory became theirs. Women, as indicated in Walker (1991), are not afraid of suffering for the sake of their children and their homes. They have an answer to the threats directed to their families and

their future, and they are prepared to fight for the right to live and move freely as human beings. Women's resistance may also help one to resist marriage hiccups.

2.8.5 Marriage

Civilized people do not wait for their parents to choose their life partners for them. They choose for themselves. But the other category, of some women who believe in non-indigenous values, do not see marriage as their end in life; instead they value their singleness and their progress in life and they envy their strength to cope with life.

It is true that a child is legitimized when she is born within marriage. But it is also possible that a child can be born out of marriage and become legitimized by the fact of her parents getting married afterwards.

Some women see themselves engaged (by their parents) to men they do not approve. But because of their parents they have to submit to whatever they are told to do. Zorom, a Russian woman writer, in her essay edited by Clyman (1994:77-82), states that:

... Women's autobiographies and fiction depict not only girls from the traditionally patriarchal merchantry and peasantry, but also from supposedly Westernized gentry families being pressured by parents into loveless marriages ... A mother forces her daughter to marry a man she detests only because he is well off.

Bryson (1992:56) asserts that:

Women should be free to follow the career of their choice, and they should not be forced into marriage through economic necessity; if however, they do choose marriage, then this is their career, and they should accept the responsibilities that it entails.

When one is married she is expected to become a mother.

2.8.6 MOTHERHOOD

Motherhood as explained in the Oxford Dictionary (2000) is the state of being a mother. Richardson and Robinson (1993) posits that motherhood is a challenge; although potentially enjoyable, it is also hard work and routinely stressful.

Radical feminists have argued that motherhood is the key means of women's oppression in patriarchal societies but one will find out that most young women see it as a means of liberation" from the prospect of dreary paid employment (Bleier, 1984).

As the status of motherhood is controlled by both social and psychological factor, motherhood is often idealised and some argue that men experience "womb envy" that is, they envy women's ability to become pregnant and give birth. Richardson and Robinson (1993) state that mothers, it seems, are seen primarily as supplying the basic conditions for survival and maintenance while experiencing a decline in their own wider capacities.

Feminist studies show that motherhood deprives women of their potential to prove themselves in other fields of life. Gavron (1977) maintains that studies by feminists about motherhood clearly show the way in which the mothering role operates to exclude women's own development, for example, sometimes in the self-defined sense of being unfit for tasks demanding intellectual skills.

At an early age girls identify themselves with motherhood. Although they envy it they do not know what real motherhood is until they experience it in their adult life. Richardson and Robinson (1993) argue that motherhood potentially provides girls/women with "entry" into womanhood.

In some cases motherhood cannot be looked upon as only denoting woman who has given birth to a child. Motherhood can be a sense of the warmth, loving and caring of a woman for other children.

Richardson and Robinson (1993:208) remark:

To become a mother is to do what women
and those around them expect and want them
to do.

Where motherhood is being judged by having children of one's own, some women are opting out of motherhood. The reason for this is not that they do not love children but that their career is more important to them than the generation of family. Richardson and Robinson (1993 :222-223) have this to say:

The influence of feminism has meant that women no longer have to see motherhood, heterosexuality and marriage as the only possible lifestyle, and myths portraying women's happiness as being confined within these parameters have now been exploited.

.... women now feel they have greater choice as to whether or not to have children or marry, or to opt out of heterosexual relationships altogether. Motherhood and womanhood, although still linked, no longer prescribe women's lives as they did in the 1950's.

Motherhood (giving birth to a child) does not apply only to married women. Even women without men do have children, depending to their choice. These women also mother their children in the same way as those who are married, which means the child is not deprived of anything. By being born out of marriage they receive much more attention from their mothers than from their fathers. This is worse in the traditional society, however a man does not want to associate with a child until a child reaches a certain age (being able to do things on its own).

In a traditional society if a woman chooses not to be a mother or is childless she becomes an outcast who does not fit in that society, or she won't be considered feminine but rather masculine.

Oakley (1974: 188) maintains that:

... the woman who chooses not to become a mother cannot be a "feminine" woman, along with motherhood she rejects womanhood.

... to be feminine means to be, or to want to be,
a mother, to reject motherhood means to be
masculine.

He further says that a woman who does not have children is pitied. If her childlessness is willed, she is seen as deviant, abnormal. Campbell quoted by Richardson and Robinson (1993) states that although it has been argued that voluntary childlessness among married women has begun to carry less stigma than before, motherhood is still the most popular option.

Oakley (1974) argues that not all cultures insist that women's main vocation is motherhood. Not all females everywhere are subject to the same processes of gender role socialization as they are in the western nuclear family. Many make parenthood a somewhat subsidiary vocation for both men and women. Sometimes it is difficult for some women to conceive but this is not because it is their fault; the fault can be either way round.

Modern feminism maintains that women must be enabled to do men's work and that men should develop their caring nurturing qualities through participation in productive life and child rearing; such a change is both an important pre-requisite of gender equality and an important goal in itself. The radical feminist idea of sisterhood, which implies an oppression shared by all women, gives way to that of solidarity, which is based in the understanding that the struggles of all women are interconnected, but that they are not the same (Bryson 1992).

Walby (1990) perceives women as people who are no longer restricted to the domestic hearth, but have the whole society in which to roam and be exploited.

Women are not ashamed of being called a woman, but they do not want to be undermined because of their sex: they want to be described as a whole person and be judged according to their contributions. Christine Bond, interviewed by Rohrbaugh (1981:260), says:

... I often say that, just because I was born packing a vagina doesn't mean that I want to be identified by that small space ; I want people to deal with the whole of me and what I am about.

In African traditional society women are being judged according to their sex. These women accept their position as natural but women who have Western influence do not accept this. If their contribution is not noticed, they view that as part of politics and that can result in a clash between women and men.

2.9 THE ENVISAGED FRAMEWORK

Feminists have posited that the third world woman writer has two major responsibilities: first, to tell about being a woman; secondly, to describe reality from a woman's view, a woman's perspective. They further say that a woman writer should be committed in three ways: as a writer, as a woman and as a third world person, and her biological womanhood is implicated in all three.

Another commitment of the female writer should be to the correction of these false images of the woman in Africa. To do this, she herself must know the truth about African women and womanhood. On the biological level, she must tell us about being a woman. How do the facts of menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth and menopause contribute to the woman's personality and the way she feels and knows her world? As a writer a woman should be committed to her vision, whatever it is, which means she has to be willing to stand or fall

for that vision. She must tell her own truth, and write what she wishes to write. But she must be certain that what she is telling is the truth and nothing but her own truth (Jones and Palmer 1987).

Ogunyemi (1985:64) states that:

More often than not, where a white woman
writer may be a feminist, a black woman writer
is likely to be a “womanist”.

The intelligent black woman writer, conscious of black impotence in the context of white patriarchal culture, empowers the black man. She believes in him, hence her books end in an integrative image of the male and female people. The black woman writer in Africa and in the United States has finally emerged as a spokeswoman for black women and the black race; through her writing she is aiding the black woman who has been and still is concerned with the aesthetics of living. Womanism with its wholesome, its religious grounding in black togetherness, is her gospel of hope (Ogunyemi 1985).

According to Warhol and Herndl (1993) black women as writers have consistently provided for themselves and others a rendering of the black woman's place in the world in which she lives, as she shapes and defines that from her own impulses and actions.

In their own voices black women writers correct the false information given by whites and males about their reality. Christian in her essay in Warhol and Herndl (1993:327) cites Alice Walker's statement:

Writing to me is not about the audience exactly.
 It's about living. It's about expanding
 myself as much as I can and seeing myself
 in as many roles and situations as possible...
 writing permits me to be more than I am.
 Writing permits me to experience life as
 any number of strange creations.

African women writers engage in several discourses, which give voice to their many realities. They are conscious of neocolonialism and are interested in fighting through their work for a greater genuine independence for Africa. They are critical of the exploitation of women. African women explore what is useful and what is dangerous to them as women in traditional cultures. They write of realities in ways male African writers do not. They become, not just artists but also path-finders for new relations between men, women and children (Davies and Fido in Owomoyela 1993).

A woman writer is committed to giving a clear explanation of who she is and of her responsibilities as a woman from a woman's point of view. She is also committed to defining the whole self through written literature because others (males) have only definition that they can give of her: that of her biological make up. It is agreed that woman's biology is important and it is also a necessary aspect but it must not be used as a scapegoat to limit her. Currey (1987:8) examines the fact that:

One of the commitments of the female (woman)
 writer should be to the correction of these false

images of the woman in Africa. To do this, she herself must know the reality of the African women, must know the truth about African women and womanhood.

As women liberate themselves from reaction to patriarchal pressures they will become more free to find within themselves, and thus express, the 'true' reality of female experience (Morris 1993).

2.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter will give a way to the chapters to follow. What we will be discussing in the following chapters, the canons of African traditions, Western values, the voice of African women writers and beyond gender inequality lean closely into this chapter as it contains the theory. The critical analysis of these chapters will lack scientific features without the base of chapter two. This means that this chapter is pivotal in the forthcoming discussions.

CHAPTER 3

CANONS OF AFRICAN TRADITIONS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will evaluate the canons of African traditions focussing on the traditional canons themselves; the respondents' response to interviews will also be analysed.. Examples from the texts will serve as a support base for the information to be given by women in the field.

Emecheta presents an African traditional society in which the roles of men and women are very sharply defined:

you are to give her children
and food, she is to cook and
bear the children and look
after you and them... A
woman may be ugly and grow old,
but a man is never ugly and
never old. He matures
with age and is dignified.

(“The Joys of Motherhood”, 1988:71)

Palmer (1986:48) states that an African traditional society:

portrays a society which is proud, dignified,
and stable, because it is governed by a complicated
system of customs and traditions extending
from birth, through marriage to death. It has its

own legal, educational, religious and hierarchical systems. This is a society in which a man's prestige is in direct proportion to the number of yams he has in his barn (and the number of cows he has in his kraal), the number of huts he has in his compound, the numbers of his wives and children.

Those writers who stick to their traditional canons support Chinua Achebe in Egejuru (1980) that their societies were not mindless, they had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, and above all they had dignity. They took pride in their heritage and their blackness.

Hurston in Wilentz (1992:6) posits what she feels is the duty of the Black writer:

We are a people. A people do not throw their genuineness away. And if they are thrown away, it is our duty as artists and as witnesses for the future to collect them again for the sake of our children, and, if necessary, bone by bone.

Now let us consider the actual canons of African traditions and how people on the field express themselves in connection with them.

3.2 WOMEN AND HOUSE WORK

Women and activities such as fetching water from the river, gathering wood from the forest, cooking for the family and looking after them cannot be separated in African traditions. In African culture it was and it is still the custom in some areas for women to fetch water from the river and "nasemithonjeni" to cook and to drink in their homes. They carry this water

balanced on their heads without holding those buckets with their hands. This is done by married, single and young girls. A woman was proud to fetch water. They even received buckets to fetch water as presents in their new homes. In those days it was believed that if there was no water in the home there was no wife or woman in that particular home. If a visitor arrives and there is not even a cup of water to offer him, the wife will be taken as the laziest person on earth ever seen. Later an ox wagon was used to help women to fetch water from the river.

In the case of gathering wood it is also women who will do the job in order to fill a heap of fire wood “igoqo” of the home. If a heap of fire wood “igoqo” of a particular household is empty, but there is a wife there, she will be looked down on by the villagers. Men do also partake in gathering wood by using wagons and other means of transport because, unlike women, they can’t balance a bundle of wood tied up “inyanda” on their heads. All these efforts that the women are doing, fetching water and gathering wood are in order to cook and look well after their families. Even the cleaning of the house depends on them, and they still have to go to the field to plough the crops so that in the time of need the family should have more food than ever.

According to some African traditions a woman is consigned to cooking and to child rearing. A woman is not supposed to go out of her home and seek for a paid job. The principles of African traditions state that it is the duty of a man to go out and work for the family whilst the woman is looking after the home and the children. Following are some of the interviewees responses:

- I was born a woman, so to be a woman means hard work.
- A woman is not supposed to sit down and relax or sleep before the night comes.

- A true woman or wife is supposed to be the first to wake up and the last to go to bed.
- A woman is the guardian angel of the family.
- I do not want to go out and work for another person, I have a home to look after rather than to go and look after a white man's family.
- Money, no, a woman, especially a married woman, has nothing to do with money. That is why we do not work, because our husband works for us.
- I enjoy housework, I even do not want any person to help me.
- A woman is taught the housework job by her mother, grandmother in her early years. that is why we take it as our job.
- Yes, a man is not supposed to go to the kitchen. it is the wife's duty to go and fix whatever the husband is looking for.
- A kitchen is a woman's place and a kraal is a man's place. We both have the no go areas.
- I will laugh if I come to your house and see your husband dishing food for himself or cooking in the kitchen, to us Xhosa Mamas it is not a good thing to do.
- As a wife you have to make sure that your husband is happy and satisfied, that is your duty.

- If you want to get a smile from a man give him food, he will be happy and you will be the best wife he has ever seen.

These women express the acceptance and enjoyment they have when doing the work which is theirs. They do not take it as if they are being overworked. Their belief is that a woman or a wife has a part to play in the home and the man as well, so their work is their role that they must perform.

Swaartbooi in "UMandisa" portrays Mandisa's mother MamNzotho as a professional teacher but because of marriage she left her profession and chose to be a housewife. This shows that Swaartbooi supports the principle of African tradition, that the place of a woman is in the home. The reason why she allowed Mandisa to continue her profession is that, she created her as a single woman. She is trying to show us that if a woman is married according to African tradition, she is supposed to leave work and look after her home and family like MamNzotho:.

Nonina lo kaMandisa wayekhe wafundisa,
 nanamhla oku, xa ehambele kowabo,
 ungafika eze kubonwa ngabafazana.
 namantombazana, nabafana abase beqolile,
 abasambiza ngokuthi ngutitshalakazi uNobantu

("UMandisa", 1975:16)

Even Mandisa's mother was once a teacher,
 even today when she visited her home,
 you will find her being visited by young
 women, girls and young men who still
 call her lady teacher Nobantu.

Dana in “Kufundwa ngamava” also supports the fact that a married woman is supposed to leave her profession and look after the well-being of her family. In this novel Nomthandazo, who is a teacher, when she marries Zweni leaves her profession and looks after the upbringing of her family by means of trading and by opening a business school:

...Walima kangako ke uNomthandazo wada walima namakhowa ambhewu wayewaphiwe nguyise. Akuba elungile la makhowa wamana ukuthumela eThekwini apho wayefumana khona iiponti ezimbini ezineshumi ngekhulu lamakhowa... Ekuhambeni kwexesha wavula isikolo sokuluka uboya kwilali yaseSulenkama...

(“Kufundwa ngamava”, 1954:88-89)

...Nomthandazo ploughs and she even ploughs the mushrooms seeds she was given by her father. When these mushrooms are ready she sends them to Durban and gets five rands for hundred mushrooms....After some time she opens a school of wool weaving at the Sulenkama village.

Dana and Swartbooi support the saying which says that the place of a woman is in the home. Their characters, MamNzothwa and Nomthandazo, accept their positions and they are very happy in their marriages because of the period and time of their socialisation. They have no reason to object because even their mothers were the model of what they are doing. In their time Western values and some changes were still in their early stages. According to their African tradition they portray a positive superego by fulfilling the role of a woman in African traditional society. Nomthandazo and MamNzothwa are, according to Lacan (1977) in their imaginary state. They derive themselves from persons other than themselves, because if they derive themselves from their own point of view they should have followed the western values

as they are educated people, but their ideal model at this stage is the mother. They experience desire for her.

Mothlabane in her drama “Inkunzi ezimbini” portrays a family which is bound to African traditions. Nokhaya and Nofinishi fulfill the principles of African tradition. They view their role in life as people who are bound to perform house work and make sure that their husbands are happy and fulfilled. Sigqibo, their husband, also believes that the household job is a woman’s job and the place of a woman is in the kitchen. This is evident on the day Sigqibo and his wives are tired, coming from the funeral. Sigqibo asks Nolasti his younger wife, who is more westernized than the other two wives, to bring him food because as a man he is not allowed to go to the kitchen. Nolasti refuses to bring something to eat for her husband, stating that she is also tired because they have both been to the same funeral. Nolasti does not see anything wrong for her husband to go to the kitchen and prepares what he wants.

Sigqibo: Ndaziva ndinqwenela inyama ndakungena endlwini. Akusekho nto niyibekele umyeni wenu Nkosikazi?...

Nolasti: Uyabona kodwa ukuba ndilungiselela ukulala ngoku? Uthi mandiyeke le nto ndiyenzayo ndenze le ifunwa nguwe, ngeli xesha uyifuna ngalo?

Sigqibo:... Nokwenza ndikuthuma ezimbizeni apho ndingenakuya mna. Uthi mandithini ke, ndiye kujingisa intshebe ekhitshini ndinomfazi? Okanye ulibele kwa ukuba ungumfazi kangangendlela ofuna ukuphathwa njengendoda ngayo?

(“Inkunzi Ezimbini”, (1994:38)

Sigqibo: I feel like eating meat. Is there anything that you kept for your husband, wife?...

Nolasti: You can see that I am preparing to sleep now? Are you saying I must stop what I am doing and do what you want, at the time you want it?

Sigqibo:...for that matter I am sending you to the pots (kitchen) where I cannot go. What do you want me to do, I must go with long beared hanging in the kitchen whereas I have a wife? Or else you forgot that you are a wife, as much as you want to be treated as a man?

The writer uses Nolasti to show that it is to recognize changes. Those who still believe in tradition need to be tolerated until it is the right time for them to accept change. Nokhaya and Nofinishi, Nolasti's co-wives, believe that the household job is for women and to say pot is to say woman. The reason for their acceptance of their tradition is that they were not educated, which means that they were not exposed to any other situation where a woman can be socialised in a different manner from the one that she knows.

Nofinishi: Khon'ungatshongo Mfazi. Masikhawuleziseni bethu athi ebuya zibe sezilungile zonke iinteleko.

(“Inkunzi Ezimbini”, (1994:6)

Nofinishi: Repeat it not woman. Let us hurry so that when he comes back the pots (food) will be ready.

Other than working hard, these women have to use the hlonipha language and ukuhlonipha in their new homes.

3.3 HLONIPHA LANGUAGE AND UKUHLONIPHA (To show respect)

To use hlonipha language and ukuhlonipha (to show respect) is an act that is only performed by women and by married women in their husband's homestead. This is mostly or commonly done in homes which are deep in traditional beliefs, Tiyo Soga (1989: 117 - 118):

Amadoda ebengenakuhlonipha kodwa wona
kwaneentombi zasekhaya apha, zide zibe zendile.
Kusenzulu nanamhla ukuhlonipha kwabaBomvu
Kwaye nasesikolweni kuseneentshiyekela ezisafuze
intlaka nexolo naxa izinto zinge mt' akaNgqika
phofu.

Men do not show respect together with the girls of that particular homestead until they are married. Hlonipha is still a big deal even today to the red core people, and some other chosen few learned people are still following the procedure although things are still not the same.

Men only have the chance to use hlonipha language when they are still initiators. After the process they forget the hlonipha language. It is used to make things easier for the 'Umtshakazi' (newly wed woman) when she arrives at her husband's homestead, while her mother in law is still alive, because she is going to learn most of the necessary information from her. Soga (1989:184) said:

Ukuhlonipha kumadoda bekungalandelwa
tyala lanto njengale mpi yasetyhini.

To show respect amongst men was not a
problem as it is with women.

It was a traditional custom of a particular homestead that women of that homestead should respect the men by not going with a bare head amongst them. Women also learn from their homes not to utter certain words related to the name of their husband's homestead. If it happens that a woman utters some of the words, her family will be seen as a family which shows no respect. Women who are married in a certain homestead are not allowed to set foot in certain areas of the house (the "inkundla"); they have to use another way than to pass by the inkundla. They are not allowed to enter the homestead kraal and they do not enter the sleeping place of their forefathers and their fathers.

The hlonipha language also develops with the women. With the process of "ukuhlonipha" they develop new vocabulary and a person who does not belong to them will feel like an outcast as she won't understand what they are talking about.

Now it is appropriate to listen to some voices of women which do practise hlonipha and ukuhlonipha languages in their husband's homesteads.

- I use Hlonipha Language because I respect my husband and my in-laws.
- A married woman cannot utter words related to the surname of the husband, so Hlonipha Language fits in that case.
- I am very happy and I love the language because it makes me feel that I am a woman -

- It identifies me from other women who are not married.
- Single women do not hlonipha - tell me who are they going to respect? Their own parents or their lovers he!
- A married woman who does not use this language I can identify her as a girl not a married woman - or she was never taught to respect by the parents and I do not identify myself with such people - never! I respect my marriage and my in-laws.
- I was not surprised when I arrived here because I learnt many things from my mother as she used to practise the language and show respect each and every day of her life. It was like she was born with all those qualities, so when I got married I knew very well what to do.
- I learn some of the things here with the help of my in-laws.
- It was a difficult process for me to learn the language and to know some of the things as I did not have a mother in-law or close in-laws to guide me. I had to rely on the relatives in order to know what is really expected of me. I also catch up some of the things with the women when we gather wood or fetch water from the river. The reason why I was so blank, it is because when I came here I was only fifteen years old. So I did not notice some of my mothers' actions in order for me to learn more, because I was still in a playful stage then; I never thought of marriage possibilities.
- You get used to the places that you are not supposed to enter and you do not even make a mistake, a mistake of seeing yourself crossing the boundaries.
- I do not have to feel anything because I know I am supposed to do what is expected of me by my in laws and make it a point that I am not going to disagree with my family

- as I am there to represent them.
- I am happy about it, because I can identify myself from other women who are not married.
- It gives me pleasure because now I can see that I belong somewhere.
- If you want to be respected by your in- laws you have to show respect to them and to their ancestors.

None of the respondents that I talked with are learned. They portray a typical traditional woman from rural areas. Although they were reluctant at first to share with a stranger they loosened up as time went by because they noticed my interest in their responses and I also showed an interest in learning so as to perform the right thing when marriage came my way.

Hlonipha language was also used by respondents when responding to some questions. They were so loyal in giving respect by language or by action that they even asked their children to translate some of the words for me. They say that to deviate might cause bad luck to them or even to their families, as they will be disobeying the ancestors of their husband's homestead. Motlabane in "Iinkunzi Ezimbini" employs this act of hlonipha language in her drama. The language is only used by Nokhaya and Nofinishi, who are traditional wives.

Nokhaya and Nofinishi even use the "hlonipha" language which is according to African tradition, only supposed to be used by married women.

Nofinishi: ...Simhlonele thina uJwarha
ukuba uyityhontsi yeli khaya.

Nolasti:...yintoni ngoku ityhontsi?

(Inkunzi Ezimbini.1994:7)

Nofinishi:...We have respect for Jwarha
because he is the man of this house.

Nolasti:... What is a man (ityhontsi)?

Dyafta in “Ikamva lethu”, also employs the hlonipha language of women. This is evident in the conversation between Nolenti and her in-laws when she brought them something to drink.

Oo! Hayi ngochuku abandyu basemtyantini,
andinidlisi koko ndisukela iinteleko phaya
enkumbeni.

(“Ikamva lethu”,
1953:8)

Oh! No, I know the in-laws are troublesome,
I am not poisoning you but I am in a hurry to
take care of the pots in the house.

Dyafta also portrays the way a woman shows respect to her in-laws.

Ungayi enkundleni nasebuhlanti balaa mzi
ungasiwanga, ungaze uyikhabe okanye uyibethe

ngobandoinja yalaa mzi. Ungaze uphume ungenanto
entloko nokuba sekusezinzulwini zobusuku.

(“Ikamva lethu”,1953:10)

You must not go to that house kraal without being
told to do so, never kick or beat a dog of that home
with a broom. You must never go out with bear head
even if it is mid-night.

Nolasti’s question shows the way African tradition deprive their women from using the language freely, as Nolasti is doing. By making use of hlonipha language and ukuhlonipha, these women also are not being called by their birth names, and in their process of ukuhlonipha they are not allowed to call their husbands by their birth names too.

3.4 NAMES

It is common amongst South Africans, when a child is born, to give a name which will die with his or her death. Usually these names follow after a certain event which is related to the birth of that child. It was the custom for a woman who married to be given a name which was known as “igama lokwenda or lobufazi” (marriage name), which would show her acceptance in her new home and that she was being respected. But to her family, that is, in her birth place, she would remain as a child and she would be called by her birth name until she dies.

In African tradition, women surrender their names when they marry. When they arrive in their new homes they are given new names. This is a very common among the Xhosas, Zulus, Sothos and other related communities. When a child is born the parents give her a name that has meaning to them and for the child’s birth. It is that when the woman is getting married, she is approaching a new phase in her life, that of being a wife and starting a family. The in-

laws will give her a name that will identify her as a wife of that family. Her original name, that is her birth name, will not be used in the new home. These names always start with No - to demonstrate womaness. This is evident in Motlabane's drama "Iinkunzi ezimbini"(1994) where there are characters such as Nolasti, Nofinishi, Nokhaya and Nolimithi. These are the quotations from the interviewees:

- This name has got a significance, you can analyse it yourself "Nomelekile" which means I was bound to be in this house. This also shows that I have been accepted by my in-laws.
- There is no way that I can forget my name because when I am at home they are still using it.
- You have to accept the name that is given to you even if it sounds terrible.
- Sometimes it happens that you are given a disgusting name because you are not being accepted by your in laws; may be they do not love you but they prefer someone else.
- As a woman you are not allowed to call your husband by his birth name. You have to call him by his clan name or by his first child's name.
- Before we got married I used to call him "bhuti" or "bhuti kaZodwa": Zodwa is his sister.
- I feel proud with the new name that my in-laws gave to me.
- My mother-in-law did not give a new name to me; she said to all her daughters-in-law "My children, I am not going to give you names; you will be called by your clan

names.”

- A new name makes you feel that you are a wife and you belong to someone else (your husband).

It is discovered that both women who adopted Western values and those who followed African tradition, accept this custom. All married informants that I talked with both educated and uneducated have these names. There were only two people who did not have them but their in-laws replaced that custom by calling them by their clan names. This is also seen in Swaartbooi's novel “UMandisa” (1995), where Mandisa's mother is called by her clan name MamNzothwa. Mandisa's grandmother is also called by her clan name. MamCirha. Notice that, just as women's names start with no-, even the clan names start with ma- to show that this is a woman.

The respondents that I have contacted feel proud about their new names because they give them security and a sense of belonging. These names also differentiate them from other women who are not married. Even the women who do not have these names their in-laws chose to call them by their clan names, those names still differentiate them from the girls of the house as they (girls) are still being called by their birth names. Other names amongst the names that I heard have no meaning, even the owner did not know its meaning, but she accepted it anyway. Those who were given names happen to have a problem with the idea of giving the “Umtshakazi” or calling her by her clan name, instead of giving her a name that will make her belong to her new home. In their comment they mention the fact that it is as if she is born again; that is why she deserves a new name.

In African traditional society a woman is not supposed to call her husband by name. She has to call him by the first child's name or by his clan name.

Nofinishi: Ibe ke sisi! Ndiyamazi mna

uJwarha ukuthanda gqitha ukuxatyiswa.

(“Iinkunzi ezimbini”. 1994:3)

Nofinshi: It is like that sisi:- I know
that Jwarha love to be respected.

Nofinshi in the following quotation shows that a woman is not supposed to call her husband by his name but by that of one of his children or his first child.

Nofinshi: uyawuhlazisa kunjalonje kuba
akakho umyeni obenconywa njengoyise
kaMandla ekuphatheni abafazi.

(“ I i n k u n z i
ezimbini”,1994:15)

Nofinshi: she is degrading it (the house)
because there is no husband who
used to be praised like Mandla's
father in handling his wives.

To support the idea in the above quotation, Dyafta in “Ikamva lethu” also shows that a woman is not allowed to call her husband by his birth name. These words are from the minister who is giving encouraging words to Nonzwakazi, who is getting married.

Indoda le yakho uzuyibize ngomntwana,
 wakowayo ungalindi ukuba uzale
 umntwana wandule ukuthi ingu so-bani,

(“Ikamva lethu”. 1953:49)

This husband of yours you must call him
 by his brother or sister, you must not
 wait until he has a child so that you can
 call him by that child ...

The differences between women and men are not only found in the home, but also in the names that women hold which identify them by means of the sex they belong to. In Traditional African Society a woman is taken as a wife if and only if the “ikhazi” is paid for, not in part but in full.

3.5 OFFERING OF IKHAZI (Ukulobolisa)

This process is an old custom among Black Africans, where a man has to give the woman’s family cows in order for him to gain her. This brings dignity to the woman among the Africans in that the “ikhazi” has been paid for. A wife for whom the “ikhazi” has been paid has rights in her home but if the lobola is not paid she won’t be given any attention.

Soga (1989: 70) utters these words:

... uthi kodwa akuba engalotyolwanga libe
 likhatshukhatshu elingananzwe bani
 ekhay’ apha.

... if she is not been “loboled” she just becomes something which is not cared for.

If it happens that her husband dies, she will be more than welcome at his home especially if the “ikhazi” was paid for. Soga (1989) states the fact that the “ikhazi” was the traditional wedding band of our ancestors. Let us hear the voices of the interviewees.

- It is very important for a man to pay ikhazi for his wife so that the wife can be respected by her family, her husband and by her husband’s family, not forgetting her community.
- A woman for whom the ikhazi is not paid is not taken as a wife.
- The ikhazi which is paid by cattle is the most powerful one because those cattle will stay at your home’s kraal and if something is going to go wrong in your marriage they indicate this by dying one after the other. At the same time if you are going to have a successful family (children), then cows will give birth even to twins.
- To pay ikhazi is an African tradition which is difficult to run away from because should one deviate or start to westernise things, one’s marriage might go wrong or one might suffer barrenness until the problem is solved i.e the “ikhazi” is sent to your family.
- I don’t know the procedure of the “ikhazi”, it is all between the men of the two families.
- I feel proud that my husband has paid the “ikhazi” to my family. That makes me feel that I belong somewhere.
- As far as I am concerned, yes, he was happy to pay such cows because he needed me to come and help in his family homestead.

- If the “ikhazi” was not finished I would not have been here. That saying of “ilobola” does not finish is the saying of the endeared ones. That is why they divorce so much.
- Cows were used for my lobola not money.
- Yes, there is a difference between paying ikhazi with cows and with money. Your ancestors will do nothing with money but cows that are going straight to “emgqubeni” (kraal) where the ancestors are, will give you blessings in your home.

These women mentioned above are proud of being “loboled”, especially by means of cows. They do not encourage monetorisation of lobola because of certain reasons, one of them being that there is no connection between the ancestors, the money and the bank. To them, to be “loboled” is a custom that every married woman should follow. There is a fear in some of them when they are asked about getting married without being paid for by ikhazi. That fear stems from the punishment to be received from the ancestors, either by being childless or losing one’s marriage by means of death.

Dyafta in “Ikamva lethu” portrays the payment of the “ikhazi” which is from the Gwala family to the family of the woman.

... kuthe xa baphuma nawo loo mhlambi
isixhenxe sonke seenkomo nethokazi lehashe
neshumi leegusha, zvakala ziyiyizela iimazi
zisithi, “Yi-yi-yi-yi-yi-i-i! Nize na-a-a-ye!

(“Ikamva lethu”, 1953:25)

... when they come out with the herd of
seven cows, a horse and ten sheep, the

women were heard making celebrating sounds.

A wife whose ikhazi has been paid so that she becomes a full member of her husband's family is expected to mourn for the death of her husband. Even traditional mourning was also expected from women.

3.6 MOURNING

It is, or was, the custom for a woman to mourn when she was having her periods. In cases like these she was not allowed to put a foot where her husband sleeps. They were also not allowed to eat sour milk until the mourning stage had passed. It was believed that their being forbidden to sour milk was to prevent the cows of that house giving birth to calves and to prevent them from dying as time went by. A wife was also not allowed to set foot on the "inkundla" of the house (a place where it is believed that the ancestors of that home are).

Another type of mourning associated with women is to mourn for a dead husband. In this case they wear black clothes for a certain period, from six to twelve months long. In other families, especially in the olden days, a woman was taken to the forest where she was not allowed to touch water until she had been released from mourning by the king and his councillors.

Mourning is one of the most respected African traditional practices. This is mostly performed by women who have lost their husbands. These women are easily identifiable by means of the clothes that they have to wear during that period. Black clothes are the most common garment that these women wear. It is believed that the reason why they have to wear these clothes is that they are being protected from the temptation of having another man before the mourning period ceases. Usually mourning takes about six, nine or even twelve months; it depends on the elders of the family. The following quotations are representatives of what we will be

discussing below:

- I am comfortable with the issue of mourning during my periods because that blood is not a clean blood so one has to respect men at that time.
- Yes, sour milk and African salad is like our daily food because we get milk from the cows. But when I am in my periods I don't eat milk nor sour milk because it will cause my periods not to stop.
- I do not eat it when the time comes. I don't feel as if this is a punishment because I know it will be only a week and after that everything will become normal.
- No I do not crave it because I know I cannot have it, beside I am used to that mourning.
- It is true, if a woman in her periods happens to deviate and eat milk or sour milk especially milk which was taken from the cows of that house, they will be barren or they will die. If something like that could happen the wife will be investigated to see whether she deviated or not. If she is found guilty she will be punished.
- Wearing mourning clothes shows your lasting commitment to your dead husband.
- These clothes show that I still respect my husband and I wish him to rest in peace.
- The painful part about these clothes is that everybody feels pity for you. I experience that when I even go to fetch water or in the forest to gather wood. Sometimes you will find them whispering about you, and you do not know whether they are saying good or bad things about you.

- I experienced a very difficult mourning period because I was accused of killing my husband. That was the most painful moment I ever experienced [she cried].
- The clothes, especially black clothes, make you isolated as if you have a contagious disease.
- I even lost a job because of these black clothes - My boss did not want to accept tea from a woman like me.
- I was embarrassed in a Taxi when someone did not want me to take her money because I was wearing mourning clothes - she said, Suka! You are going to bring me bad luck.

These women do accept that they have to practise mourning on certain occasions. They take it as a custom to perform such things. To them mourning is part of their life, as they have to perform it each and every month till they reach menopause. In the case of mourning for a dead husband, it is noticed that some women were not happy about it, because they ended up being accused of murder or being victims of circumstances. But others felt that mourning is a way of showing respect to their husband. One of them mentioned that other women mourn with their clothes not with their hearts. This means that to wear mourning clothes does not necessarily mean you feel something for your husband, it can happen that you wear them to satisfy the in-laws and the community.

In areas such as Eastern Africa, as portrayed by Emecheta in her novel 'The bride price, mourning is one of the oppressive acts that a woman in African tradition is bound to practise when the husband dies.

Ma Blackie was to remain alone in this special hut,
not until the months of mourning were over could

she visit people in their homes. She must wear
continuously the same old smoked rags.

(“The bride price”, 1995:72)

Mourning is an African traditional form which is difficult to run away from. If you are an African and you are a woman you have to practise it when the time comes.

Magadla in her novel “Isazela sidl’umniniso” portrays Tozi who after her husband’s burial, mourns for him.

Emva kweentsuku ezintathu wakhululwa
esibhedlele wagoduka waya kungcwaba
waza wazilela umyeni wakhe.

(“Isazela sidl’umniniso”, 1992:92)

After three days she was discharged from
the hospital and she went home to bury her
husband and after that she mourns for him.

Emecheta and Magadla reflect their traditional role in African culture. Through their books they pass on the life of their culture. In most families the mourning period is made to be a traumatic moment for the mourner. The wife is tortured by her in-laws to wear black clothes for a very long period, not because they want to fulfil the custom but because they want to punish her as they believe that she has killed her husband. In cases like these, mourning becomes an act of revenge and anger from the in-laws to the wife. This also has a psychological effect on her. It affects her emotionally and physically as she has to listen to the accusation and is unable to defend herself because she is not allowed to exchange words with her in-laws. These are the reasons that have caused people to have negative attitude to mourning, because it does not carry the dignity that it used to carry, but instead it serves as a

symbol of oppression over women. In any case, if a woman does abide by her traditions she will be taken as a true woman.

3.7 MOTHERHOOD - WOMANHOOD

According to the African traditional viewpoint, a woman becomes a mother when she has a child or children and her motherhood would lead to her womanhood. This means that without being a mother a woman cannot enter womanhood; that is, motherhood is the key to womanhood. The following quotes emphasize this point:

- To me to be able to be a true woman and to be a mother you must have a child, not even a girl but a boy - then your husband will respect you.
- If you do not have children your womanhood is gone, that is why sometimes your in-laws will identify you with one of their bulls in their kraal.

Heroines in the books that we are going to discuss below have the feeling that their failure of motherhood means loss of womanhood. This feeling is being driven by an African traditional saying that a woman who does not have children for her husband is a failed woman. NnuEgo in Emecheta's "The joys of motherhood", because of societal influence, lost hope after she lost her child. She cried in agony that she was not a woman anymore (1988:61). In Nwapa's novel "Efuru", Efuru realises that she cannot be a mother anymore and she advises her husband to look around for a second wife who will be able to give him children (1979:26). Even in her second marriage she also suggests to her mother-in-law that her husband must marry Nkonyeni as a second wife (1979:180).

In Mbekeni and Ntloko's drama entitled "Bhut'Lizo ndixolele" MamXesibe, Nonzwakazi's mother-in-law, reminds Nonzwakazi of her failure to be a woman.

MamXesibe: Kakade andiyiboni into osayihlaleleyo
 apha xa ufelwe yindoda. Ungahlala nendoda
 iinyanga ezingaka kanti iza kufa ingashiyanga nto
 eya kuba ngumfanekiso wayo. Ndiza kulenza ntoni
 mna idlolo?

("Bhut' Lizo ndixolele", 1979:56-57)

MamXesibe: I do not see any reason for you staying
 here when your husband is dead. How can you stay
 with a man for such a long time but he is going to pass
 away without leaving his picture behind. What am I
 going to do with a barren person ?

Nonzwakazi like NnuEgo in Emecheta's "The joys of motherhood", cries in agony when her mother-in-law insults her barrenness. The way she cries shows that inside her there is a feeling that she fails as a woman, and now she is being blamed for that. Tozi in Magadla's novel "Isazela sidi'umniniso" tries to overcome the torture of being a failed woman by committing adultery and becomes pregnant. By doing this she wants to prove to her mother-in-law, who had been long looking to her stomach to protrude, that she is not a barren woman. In this case the pressure of African tradition has psychological effects on the woman. Tozi's actions become abnormal because she wants to satisfy her mother-in-law and the people in the village. She acts as if she is out of her mind because it is discovered that she still loves her husband, but the only thing she wants is the child.

Even in the other writers, Emecheta, Nwapa and Mbekeni and Ntloko show how the pressure

of African tradition to require children from women, can affect their lives. In the case of NnuEgo she nearly commits suicide because of her loss of her child. Efurú ends up losing both her husbands and she went back to her father's homestead. Nonzwakazi also because of the death of her husband, went back to her home because her mother-in-law ill-treated her to such an extent that she could not bear it anymore. Her mother-in-law, MamXesibe, always reminds her of her barrenness, and because of that, Nonzwakazi even wishes to die rather than to live anymore.

These writers want to put an end to the torture that women receive because of African tradition. They also express the fact that, if a woman is unable to have children that should not be blamed on her because sometimes, as in the case of Chumani and Tozi in Magadla's "Isazela sidl'umniniso", the husband is the one who has the problem of infertility. But the African tradition does not have the room to believe that a man might be unable to produce children due to some sicknesses that he had in his youth because men are seen as superior beings or with high status.

3.8 MAN AS SUPERIOR BEING

Men's status is one of the important issues in African tradition. A man is viewed as the head of the house. He is the one who is suppose to look after the family, and he is the one who is suppose to take decisions about the welfare of the family, and his word should be considered as final. These quotations will prove what we will be discussing :

- I take man as my superior and as my provider.
- Yes of course, he is the head of the house and there is nothing that can change that.
- I cannot do anything without his concern.

- Even if I can see he is not on the right track about certain things concerning the house, I am not the one who is supposed to exchange words with him. I'll rather approach his brothers so that they can talk to him.
- Sometimes I feel bad when my views are not given consideration but because we respect each other, we both have to accept the fact that my point was pointless.
- In my home we both respect each other. We both have contribution in the welfare of the house.
- He welcomes my views and he makes use of them.
- I agree with that saying, yes, he is the head as the Bible says but he does not misuse his headship by being a king or a ruler in the home.

These respondents mentioned above do accept the man as the head of the house. They feel comfortable to have people who are going to protect them and their families. But they also undermine their integrity because if the man happens to dismiss their views they accept it as if they committed a mistake by raising a certain issue.

Men responded as follows in their own voices:

- My child, even the Bible does state that we are the heads.
- There is no woman who will put law in my house as long as I live.

- I am the head in my home and no one can change that. If my wife or even my son wants to take my place - I will throw them away, as long as I live I am going to start the tune.

Traditional men do not want women who want to overpower them in their houses. They want to feel that their women or wives are under their control. In this case Dyafta in "Ikamva lethu" shows how men have to be given respect by their wives. This is evident from the minister's words to Nonzwakazi.

... uze uyoyike nje ngoyihlo indoda yakho,
yaye ilizwi lakho ze lingaze libe lelokugqibela
endodeni yakho, uzifundise ukuba uthi yakuthi
pheza upheze nokuba uyaqonda ukuba yiyo
ephosisileyo.

("Ikamva lethu", 1953:49)

... you must be afraid of your husband just
like your father, and your voice must never
be the last to your husband, you must teach
yourself that when he says stop and you must
stop even if you know that it is him who is
off the track.

Men hold the most respected positions in traditional society. They are viewed as superiors who hold high status. In Magadla's "Isazela sidli' umniniso", we have noticed that Chumani and Tozi's neighbours and people from the community blame Tozi for Chumani's suicide - none of them is interested to know the reason why Tozi behaves in such a manner that causes so much pain to her husband that he commits suicide. Their concern is for Chumani and the

way the car accident happened. Magadla's concern here is the torment that women receive from their in-laws, especially mothers-in-law, when they are unable to have children in their marriages, and the results.

In Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* the importance of men's feelings over those of women is seen when NnuEgo fails to commit suicide. As in Tozi's case no one is interested to ask the reason why she is going too far; people's concerns are for NnuEgo's husband, Nnaife.

You mean you have a baby at home and you
come here disgracing the man who paid for you
to be brought into this town?

("The joys of motherhood", 1988:62)

Emecheta and Magadla show how women's personal circumstances and their mental torture are ignored in a traditional African society. According to them a woman is not supposed to behave in a way that will degrade her husband's status. That is why no one bothers to enquire about what NnuEgo's problem is, because she is already judged as stupid. It is also expected that as a senior wife NnuEgo is supposed to be strong as a man; no matter what happens in her life she is not supposed to give up.

3.9 MARRIAGE

In an African traditional society it is taken as a custom that a woman is not supposed to choose a life partner for herself, it is the responsibility of her father and his brothers to do so. They choose a man who is well off and who is a hard-worker. The man's outward appearance is none of their business. The only thing that counts to them is that the man they have chosen is going to offer the "ikhazi" and he is going to look after their child successfully. The child is not given a chance to comment or to disagree. According to the custom she has nothing to do

with the process. It is also the same procedure with a man who has to marry. These women with their own voices will support the discussion to follow:

- My parents chose a husband for me and I was happy that I was going to belong somewhere at last.
- Yes, it was not easy to get used to him but as time goes you learn to love him because that is the way your parents want it to be.
- I was taken from the river by a number of men, unaware mind you, so that is why , I am still here today.

In “The joys of motherhood”, Emecheta makes the reader feel the misery and frustration to which such an arrangement can lead. Agabadi, NnuEgo’s father, chooses a serious husband for his daughter. He even ignores Idayi’s advice that he needs to change with the times. He becomes adamant in his views because his clan supports him, as they believe that a woman cannot hate a man chosen for her by her people. NnuEgo’s first sight of her husband Nnaife embarrasses her. She even hates the way he is built, most especially his protruding belly.

... and was just falling asleep with a full stomach
like a man with a belly like a pregnant cow, wobbling
first to this side and then to that. The belly, coupled with
the fact that he was short, made him look like a barrel...
If her husband-to-be was like this, she thought, she felt
like bursting into tears, like begging the senior Owulum
to please take her home...

(“The joys of motherhood”, 1988:42-43).

NnuEgo cannot believe that her father has sent her to marry this kind of person who is not even good looking. But because of her respect for her father and for her tradition she learns to live with him although she shows the signs of unhappiness and dissatisfaction. This also nearly spoils their marriage because she always clashes with her husband as she does not have any affection for him. Akunna's pregnancy brought about changes in their lives because she had to accept the commitment given to her by her family.

In Dana's novel, "Kufundwa ngamava", Thozama asks permission from her parents to approve her marriage with Zweni.

Bazali bam ababekekileyo, ndiwuphosa kuni ke lo mcimbi,
ukuba niyathanda ukuhlobana nabazali balaa mfana,
ndoqhuba ngolo hlobo nam.....

("Kufundwa ngamava". 1954:57)

My dear parents, I pass this issue to you, if you want to
have a relation with the parents of that man, I will do likewise...

Dana believes that it is important for a girl, even if she is educated, to have the approval of her husband by her parents. She supports African tradition, that if one's parents do approve her marriage she will be blessed at her new home. Talking of marriage, polygamy is also one of the types of marriage amongst Africans, and will be discussed here.

3.10 POLYGAMY

Polygamy was the oldest custom amongst the Africans. A man was allowed to marry as many wives as he liked. He would have his first house, which is called "indlu enkulu" (main house) and "ukunene" (middle house) Two of these houses would have other houses called

“amaqadi” (small house), which are related to them. These wives used to respect each other and they also showed loyalty to their husband by making sure that he was always full, and happy, and thereafter he would reward them with his love (Inkathalo).

Respondents commented as follows:

- We are happy in this marriage because we are able to help each other with housework - chores, raising children and other things.
- Jealous, that word does not fit here, we are here to serve our in-laws and our husband and not our own interests.
- Our husband cares for all of us equally.
- I do not want to answer you in that because traditionally the word love does not have a place; as long as your husband looks well after you and you look well after him you will be a happy family, happiness is the most important thing.
- This is the best marriage as compared to the one I was involved in, that of being the only wife.
- You do not have any companion to share household jobs and other things.
- Yes, I am happy, because if I was married to a monogamous family maybe I would have lost my marriage because I cannot have children. But in this polygamous marriage you cannot say that I do not have children because my co-wives do contribute their children to me and they become my own.

- This type of marriage is fair to our women because you will find that there will be few women which are unmarried. I am talking about this vicinity where we are living and surrounding villages.
- What can one gain in a monogamous marriage? You gain nothing but in this kind of marriage (polygamy) you learn many things from your co-wives. We groom each other. If one is new amongst us we show her everything so that she can feel at home.
- Our husband did consult us before he took a younger wife. We were also involved in choosing the right wife for him.
- No, we were not involved, as a first wife I only see a new face in the yard then I will know this is my co-wife. But under those circumstances, as the first wife I will go and introduce myself and I will also find that our husband has already told her about me. I will take her and orientate her around the house and give her a hand where necessary.

The women quoted above show the positive side to polygamy. They don't feel frustrated about sharing one husband between two to four wives. They take this as something that is supposed to be done by a traditional man. They also don't have, or show, any signs of jealousy amongst each other. Instead they work together helping one another to accomplish their goal, that is, looking after the house, children and their husband and their in-laws, if there are any. Most of them see polygamy as something that can help single or unmarried women to be married by joining a polygamous marriage. To these women polygamy is not a threat; instead, it is what they are seeking for, because as they have indicated it has more advantages than a monogamous marriage. They view a monogamous marriage as something which is supposed to be performed by whites, not African blacks. The issue of choosing another wife depends on the "head" of the house and his family. Some families involve the other wives and others don't. In most cases if the mother-in-law is still alive, other wives are not given a chance to

choose their co-wife.

Polygamy is viewed by Dixon (1996) as an alternative for those women who stay without men. It is said that it has distinct social and economic advantages. It helps to quickly generate a man's family and it is also advantageous to the wives in the sense that they share housework instead of doing it alone. In African tradition a wealthy man is one who has more than one wife and he is going to gain respect for that.

Sigqibo's other wives, Nokhaya and Nofinishi, in Motlhabane's "Iinkunzi Ezimbini" are very happy in their marriage, because they are illiterate and they also believe in African tradition. They know that a man needs to be respected by his wives. They do not cause Sigqibo, their husband, any problems in their marriage.

Nwapa, in her novel entitled 'Efuru' also shows the positive side of polygamy. She portrays a woman who is unable to have children and because of that she suggests to her husband takes another wife so that he can have children. Efuru accepts polygamy as something that is natural and as something that is bound to happen. That is why she even says that it is only a bad woman who wants her husband to herself (1997:53). Nwapa portrays Efuru as a woman who lives under serious African traditions and she also accepts its conditions. Efuru is worried about her condition of not having children, but the issue of sharing her husband with other women does not bother her at all.

We want to marry again, Efuru said laughing.
Really, why? "Eneberi wants to marry another
wife, and I think it is the right thing to do.
Nkoyeni is giving us trouble.... we must get

another wife who will compete with her.
 She thinks she can do what she likes in this house.
 So we are looking around.

(“Efuru”, 1979: 214)

In the above quotation it is evident that Efuru is part of the process of choosing a wife for her husband and she is part of the decision making. This is unlike Ramatalouye’s case in *Bâs* “So long a letter” where she was told by the elder people that her husband got married to another woman. It is important that women should be part of decision making on issues that involves tradition so that they do not see themselves as outcasts when a decision is being made. Efuru does not show the delusion of jealousy as NnuEgo did in Emecheta’s “The joys of motherhood”, because she respects the African view that a man is a man by having children that will continue his family line. Nwapa shows how African tradition in this novel sees the value of children in every marriage. This is also proved by the words of the women of the village that:

the richest woman on earth is the poorest
 without a child, what is money? Can a bag
 of money go for an errand for you? Can a
 bag of money look after your old age? Can
 a bag of money mourn you when you are dead?
 A child is more valuable than money.

(“Efuru”, 1979:37)

The writer is trying to show how African tradition encourages women to accept polygamy as an alternative in their marriage lives. Efuru does not blame her husband when she discovers that he has a child with another woman. Efuru’s reaction to this situation can be interpreted as that of any woman who belongs to the African traditional society. By making Efuru an

understanding and willing wife Nwapa wants to eliminate the act of adultery by men. She also discourages illegitimate children because that is also unfair for the child's future.

Wakaranja in Parkin and Nyamwaya (1987:247) remarks that:

having children, the women insisted, was
integral to the definition of a full and
complete marriage and of womanhood.

Nwapa, quoted by Wilentz (1992), illustrates that, dialectically, as upholders of tradition, women are powerful figures, economically secure and socially vibrant, yet they are limited in their choices by a restrictive cultural milieu. That is why one will find that they are bound to perform customs that are sometimes painful but because they are women they have to stomach the pain in order to accomplish their motherhood and their womanhood.

3.11 CUSTOM

In some African traditional societies, circumcision of girls is taken as one of the important things that a woman is supposed to perform for her entrance to womanhood. If one fails to go through this stage it is traditionally believed that she won't be a woman. These are the few words from the interviewees:

- A young girl is supposed to go to initiation school (Intonjane) when the time comes, to avoid barrenness and lack of marriage.
- Yes, "Intambo yobuntombi" is also important for a girl in order that things for her should go well.

- I am happy in my marriage and it is productive because I have performed all the necessary customs.

Nwapa in her novel "Efulu" illustrated the performance of circumcision on young women by elderly women of the village. Efulu finds herself in a situation whereby she has to accept circumcision, which is said to be painful.

You are the young wife, my daughter, you are beautiful my daughter. I will be gentle with you. Don't be afraid. It is painful no doubt, but the pain disappears like hunger.... You know Nwakaego's daughter? She did not have her bath before she had that baby who died after that dreadful flood.....

("Efulu", 1979:10)

This quotation shows the writer's emphasis on the power of custom. This is dedicated to the most delicate part, that of having children. The writer knows that no woman would like to get married and have no children, as it is said that the primary purpose of marriage is to raise a family. Wilentz (1992:11) also emphasises on the effect of children in marriage.

No matter how good a marriage is, the culture says, it means nothing unless there are children to show for it.

In the novel "Efulu", we see the importance of passing a custom from generation to generation. It is also used as a weapon to show girls who turn against circumcision of women that this is a mistake.

The elderly women of the community protect the tradition which oppresses them, but they do not see that it is oppressing them because of the way they are made to believe. Wilentz (1992) indicates that Nwapa not only explores the passing on of a cultural traditions through the female members of her Igbo community, she also passes on the story and culture of an almost precolonial traditional West African Village to those of her readers who remember and those who have never known it. He also maintains that the aim of transforming these traditions is that a future generation will benefit from the wisdom of the ancestors.

In “Nyana, nank’unyoko” by Taleni she shows the disadvantages that single women parents encountered when they are being rejected by their baby’s father. This does not affect only the mother but also the child. In this book African customs are given a positive side. The writer shows the importance of African customs and the punishment that one can receive if he ignores custom or performs the wrong one. Lumkile, Balise’s son suffers a great deal, because he was left on Monelis’s door step by her mother in his early years and he grew up knowing Monelisi’s family as his family. He performed the customs that are being practised in this house, but unfortunately for him he became sick.

Nontombi: Asikuko, uDr Maguma
ugulela ukungabikho.

Balise: Yintoni?

Nontombi: Yaziswa ngubani ngoku
isuke yangathi iza entloko nje

(“Nyana, Nank’unyoko”: 1997:60)

Nontombi: Dr Maguma is seriously ill.

Balise: What is it?

Nontombi: Who knows, because it seems as if it's affecting his head.

Lumkile recovers from his sickness after he sees his real mother for the first time after he was dumped as a child.

Monelisi: Lumkile, ulele apha nje uyakhumbula
ukuba uthe sakwenzela imbeleko saxakana nawe?
Lifikile iyeza lakho xa ubona lo mfazi

(“Nyana, nank’unyoko”. 1997:66)

Monelisi: Lumkile, do you remember that you are sleeping here because after we have performed a ceremony for you, you got sick? Your medicine has come when you see this woman.

Those who belong to the African traditional society can be seen as introverts because they do not voice their feeling, instead, they are told what to do by their fathers and husbands who, in De Beer (1996), are seen as the signifiers of the law. the symbolic law of culture which is the social taboo of incest. Among the customs that Africans have. it was believed that a childless woman should get help from other wives in order for her to have children.

3.12 CHILDLESSNESS

It was a custom among the Xhosas if a woman was barren, to take her co- wife and have a child for her. In other cases a child would be taken from another house and be given to a woman who could not have children. A barren woman is scolded for being barren and she is given names like “inkabi” (bull), “igqwirha’ (witch). Let us hear what the women interviewed had to say:

- I do not feel it, as my core wives have got children, so their children are like my own children.
- My husband does not show any negative attitude towards me, I am happy in my marriage as there are other children that belong to him in the household. I can say it helped me a lot to marry in polygamy.
- To tell you the honest truth, yes this was a very big problem to my in-laws. They were giving me ugly names but because I know I came here to be a wife I overlooked those things. Now I am an old woman and I am happy as we have tried to sort out our differences.
- Oh! It never came into my mind, and I do not picture myself telling my husband that it might be him who has a problem, he could throw me out of the house there and then.
- How can a man lack reproductivity? I do not want to listen to what you are saying. I told you it is I who have a problem, that’s all.

- If you are married you have to expect anything. Like for instance to be insulted, for your lack of reproductivity and many other things. I stayed in this marriage because I was told what to expect by the elders.
- I am still trying to have a child. I am using traditional healers' roots of medicine.
- No, it is only me who is under the treatment; my husband does not have a problem.
- He does not have a problem because he is a man. He cannot drink these things.

The concern in the above voices is that no matter what accusations one receives from her in-laws because of barrenness, she has to accept it as she has come to that house to be a wife. At the same time these women do not see any possibility that their husbands could be the ones who have a problem concerning sterility. Here the man is taken as a perfectionist, a person who cannot develop any sickness which could lead to a lack of fertility. These women blame themselves because they believe that they are the only one who can carry a child in the womb; they forget that there is something that needs to happen before that, fertilisation, and both of them need to be fertile in order for the process to be successful. Those who love children from other wives are comfortable with them, they take them as if they were their own. Initiation of girls is another African custom.

3.13 INTONJANE: A WOMAN'S INITIATION

This custom was very respected by the ancestors. The child was looked after by the old women of the family. To the women this custom is like the initiation of the boys. In the process there is also a cow that is slaughtered. The woman or women in initiation are accompanied by other girls called "ijaka". Women in initiation are not allowed to eat milk or sour milk, just like any African woman who having her monthly period. The reason for taking

the girls to initiation is that she is being prepared so that she can be able to have children when she is married. They used to stay ten days in initiation. After the girl has come out, she will be ready to be seen by a man. Let us hear what these young women have to say about this ceremony.

- I think it is important to practise “intonjane” because it gives one an opportunity to be successful in life.
- A person will be able to get children and her marriage will be a good marriage.
- If one fails to do this her life can be miserable in so many ways. For an example, she can be unable to get children, to get married, or if married to have a happy marriage, she can be sick with sickness which can confuse the doctors, but if she can do her “intonjane” those things can fall away.
- Yes, you don’t wash for the whole period, but I can say that does not bother you, first of all you knew before you get in that it is like that and secondly you only tell yourself it is a passing period and this is one of the ways that can make it successful.

Looking at the above statements it can be observed that “intonjane” is taken by these girls as one of the important ceremonial customs that a woman must undergo in order for her to be a successful woman or wife. Girls in traditional homesteads take “intonjane” as one of their life givers. They are also concern about marriage and having children, as it is always in their answer when they are asked a question.

3.14 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this chapter shows a number of major principles of African traditions. These were also proved by the comments of the respondents mentioned under each sub-topic. It is good to learn that there are people who still believe and practise their African traditions and to see some African women writers conscientising the people about their traditions.

The respondents and the writers who support African traditions can be viewed as people who look at the importance of the positive aspects of black life. These writers work very hard to achieve black instead of looking at themselves in isolation, by being positive about the things that affect black people. In their voices, we can notice that our respondents celebrate their black roots and give a balanced presentation of black womandom.

The writers who support African tradition agree with African feminists, whose idea is not based on equality but also accommodates African traditions such as polygamy. African feminism does not view polygamy or women's work as part of women's oppression but as something which is part of their tradition.

CHAPTER 4**WESTERN VALUES****4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will focus on how western values affect women and society at large. These values will further suggest solutions to the problems and accusations that women suffer because of African tradition. Hagan in Vago (1989) maintains that modern society is a product of what he (Hagan) calls innovational personality. It is characterized by attributes such as creativity, curiosity, and openness to experience. He further maintains that a person with this type of personality persistently looks for new solutions and does not take generally accepted evaluations for granted. Such a person sees the world as having a logical and coherent order that can be understood and explained. Freud assumes that childhood determines what people will become and how they will react to values and events. He also states that the values inculcated in a person's mind in early childhood remain for life. Let us consider, therefore, how the following writers from different parts of the world portray this issue of western values. Responses from interviewees, analyses of those responses will also be included. Examples from the texts will also be used.

4.2 WOMEN WITHOUT MEN

This sub-topic is going to look at the independence of women, and is also going to encourage women not to feel guilty when they leave their lives without men. We are also going to prove that women can be more successful on their own than to stay with someone who will treat her as a slave in her home.

the new characteristically urban figure of the male - unprotected, husbandless single woman has significantly taken shape: and in the light of the traditional view of celibacy as a social failure, even a crime against society, the consciously deliberate rejection of marriage on the part of an increasing number of urban women appears to be a courageous, indeed a daring deed.

(Cutrefelli in Jones & Palmer, 1987: 3)

The term "women without men" refers to single, divorced, separated and widowed women. This does not literally mean that the woman does not have a lover, but it figuratively means that she is not married. Some women stay without men because they choose to do so, some are abandoned by their spouses or they are forced by circumstances to stay without men.

Women without men are better off in an urban society than in rural areas, where this is viewed as against African custom. According to African tradition a woman is not supposed to stay unmarried because by doing so she is disgracing the name of her family.

Frank (1981) indicates that until recently most African novels have been written by men, and they tend to focus on social, historical, and political rather than personal or domestic themes. She also posits that women characters in these novels are defined by their relations to men, they are someone's daughter, wife or mother.

The large number of women writers that have emerged, portrays their female characters as having a destiny of their own. Their themes also embrace the solution of a world without men. This is evident in some of the work of Emecheta, Nwapa, Aidoo, Bâ, Mbekeni, Ntloko and Mayosi's work.

The heroines in these novels choose a single life in an urban world where their singlehood will be more easily accepted than in African traditional society where a woman will be pressurised to get married.

Before we go deeper into our discussion let us look at the comments of some women that I interviewed during the course of this research. The comments have been sifted and rearranged in the following manner.

Divorced women in urban areas

- I am better off now than when I was still married.
- I live my own life - I take my own decisions.
- This is when I feel that I am a grown up woman who can take her own decisions at her own suitable time.
- My life in marriage was like being in prison. I do not see myself going to marriage again in my whole life.
- I am happy more than ever before, in fact I do not want to see the doors of marriage again, never!.
- I would rather be a "mistress" not a wife. I know I will be happier than a wife.
- No, no, I do not think back, my marriage was like a hot fire.

- My husband divorced me, yes I was devastated at first. I thought I won't be able to cope with so many things, but here I am today with my beautiful kids, driving a car, something that was like stars to me the time I was married. I can say, I was not aware that independent life is so comfortable.
- I was married for five years. To tell you the honest truth in those five years I was the only person who looked after the well-being of the house, children and my husband too. My husband was not working but he used to drink like "hell". After I divorced him. I managed to clothe myself with at least decent clothes. As you can see I have got dream furniture in my house, I'm not boasting it is true. I nearly destroyed myself by staying in that marriage, it was a joke. My money was spent on liquor and friends by my husband.

The women mentioned above are very confident about themselves. They like to be independent, more especially when they see that they are better off without their husbands. There is nothing wrong for a woman to be a breadwinner because God created us differently, therefore our wishes and success cannot be the same. These women do not like to see all the decisions being taken by men, whilst they are also human beings who can reason the same way as men do. Yes, divorce is not a good experience but when things go wrong, one has to try something else which can be of comfort to her. These women can survive and be successful in life without being held up by the hand of men.

Widowed women in urban areas

- I'll rather stay alone because I do not know how the other person will treat me.
- Of course yes, I am going to have relationships here and there but not marriage.

- Yeh, that's true - at my age I won't get a single person - I do not mind to be a "second wife" as long as there are not strings attached.

Some women are afraid to involve themselves in second marriages after they have lost their husbands. But what is interesting about them is that they let life go on. It depends on what one sees as being good in life, whether one wants to continue with life or not.

Widowed women in rural areas

- My husband was everything to me, but because I cannot stay without someone in my life. I am going to get married again.
- My husband's brother is going to take me as his wife - I cannot say no because it is an African tradition, it has to be done.
- No woman can stay without anyone to help her.
- I do not know what is going to happen to me now that my husband is gone. I have to wait and hear from my in-laws what are they going to say.

Women who follow African tradition are aware that they cannot live their whole life without being helped or looked after by men. My experience has shown that widowed women in rural areas had good lives while they are taken care of by their husband's brothers. It was not bad then and it is good to find out that there are people who are still bound by their traditions.

Separated women in urban areas

- This separation has taught me to be myself.
- I am more responsible now than ever before.
- I like, in fact I love this kind of life, it is so relieving.
- Men can make you sick you know. I'll rather prefer to be close to a friend than to a boyfriend or husband.
- Husbands of today are a "nuisance". they do not know how to make a woman happy so that is why I have decided to leave him so that I can have a peace of mind.
- Sisi (sister), I am happy now. for that matter I would like to divorce him - this separation has helped me to take a decision. I am better off without him or I will die young my dear.

Some women are separated from their husbands in order to live their own lives. They do love their husbands but they feel the pressure of being controlled. They decide to have another experience in life by being separated in their marriages.

Single women in urban areas

- Yes, I want to have children but not in a marriage. I do not need to get married in order to have children. Anyone can have children at any time. remember this is the nineties.

- No, with a big NO, I do not want to get married, I have taken a decision. I feel that my profession comes first.
- No marriage and no children, that's me. I have made a choice between family life and to be a career woman and I have chosen the latter.
- What! No one can force me, even the custom itself. It is my decision, mine alone. not even my parents or relatives, even my boyfriend can change my mind. Education gives us privileges to make decisions about our future these days.
- I do not want to be ruled by a person, that is why I chose this life.
- I love my boyfriend but I do not want to be dependent on him or his love. I want to live my own life in my own way.
- If marriage can come I won't say no, but I am not dying for it, it makes no difference at all.

Most women feel happy when they are single mothers. But there are women who feel that their career is the most valuable thing for them, so they cannot waste time on the upbringing of children. This view is part of life: no one can do anything about it. The information that I have gathered shows that women can be better off single if they wish to be. Women can survive and occupy top positions in the job market without the help of men. Good family support, community support as well as self motivation and respect can take single women to the stars.

Single women in rural areas

- As a woman your home is with your husband and in-laws, so I want to get married and have children.
- You will have a bad stigma if you grow old at home and no children.
- A woman is supposed to be deflowered by her husband, that is why I am still a virgin.

Some women feel that they should marry in order to build their well-being. This happens more especially with the African women who believe that “women’s home is in the homestead” (ikhaya lentombi lisemzini).

From these different voices, i.e. Western and Traditional, we can see that it is more usually the western world that allows women to live without men. Now let us hear the voices of different women writers talking through their books. According to Freud’s theory these women are unveiling that which was unconscious in their lives but because of patriarchal rule it was suppressed; yet now it is back in their conscious mind, that is why they have the guts to talk about themselves.

In Bâ’s novel entitled “So long a letter”, Aissatou does not accept Mawdo’s decision to take a second wife. She interprets Mawdo’s decision as an act of betrayal of her trust and a form of rejection of their love life together.

I am stripping myself of your love, your name clothed in
my dignity, the only worthy garment, I go my way

(“So long a letter”, 1989: 32).

Polygamy is one of the things that force women to live without men. In most works written by women in which the husband decides to take a second wife, the first wife leaves the husband and prefers to stay without men rather than to share her husband. In the case of Ramataulaye in “So long a letter” she was abandoned by her husband for one of her daughter’s school mates as her co-wife. Pain and anger fills Ramataulaye’s heart because she still loves her husband. Ramataulaye’s life without men is not a willed or chosen freedom, but she learns to live with it and she eventually enjoys it. She is given a car by her friend Aissatou and she assumes control over herself. She is able to transport herself and her children.

Ramatoulaye realizes her potential for happiness because she is no longer accepting her role from her husband. She is able to look after everything that her husband used to do. She pays electricity bills and water, replaces the lock and latches of broken doors, replaces windows by herself:

I was surviving - in addition to my former duties,
I took over Madou’s as well.

(“So long a letter”, 1989: 51).

The author shows that women can survive without the help of men. In some cases women become grateful to their husbands for leaving them because they have discovered strength in themselves that was invisible while they were still with their husbands.

... The more I thought about it, the more grateful I
became to Madou for having cut off all contact!

(“So long a letter”, 1989: 52).

In Nwapa's novel entitled "One is Enough", Amaka, like Ramataulaye and Aissatou in Bâ's "So long a letter" packs her clothes and leaves her husband when her husband Obiora takes a second wife. Amaka makes the decision of leaving the traditional society of Onitsha for Lagos, an urban society, where her singlehood would be accepted and supported. She allows her freedom by sleeping with any man of her choice as long as she is going to get what she wants at the end of the day. She feels very satisfied by her actions because she is the one who chooses her oppressors not her family or anyone else. She enjoys her independent life of owning a three bedroomed house and a car, and she also has children of her own.

The author portrays a woman who wants freedom of choice about the person who is going to sleep with her. She shows that it is important for a woman to choose a person who is going to be her "oppressor" by herself, so that she cannot blame anyone when things go the other way.

Ramataulaye's singlehood in "So long a letter" allows her the freedom to take decisions on her own. This is why she rejects Dauda's offer to be his second wife. She has had the experience of marrying only for divorce, so she does not want to involve herself in the same situation ever again.

Dauda Ding, a rich man, a deputy, a doctor, of your own
age group, with just one wife. He offers you security, love,
and you refuse!

("So long a letter", 1989: 69).

Amaka refuses the church father's proposal to marry her and she utters these words:

I don't want to be a wife ... a mistress, yes, with a lover, yes of course, but not a wife. There is something in that word that does not suit me. As a wife, I am never free. I am a shadow of myself. As a wife, I am almost impotent. I am in prison, unable to advance in body or soul. Something gets hold of me as a wife and destroys me. When I rid myself of Obiora, things started working for me. I don't want to go back to my "wifely" days. No, I am through with husbands. I said farewell to husbands the first day I came to Lagos.

("One is Enough", 1981: 132).

Amaka does not want to go back to the submissiveness and powerlessness that she experienced as a wife in a traditional African society. Just as Ramataulaye opposes Dauda's marriage, she also opposes marriage preferring to be single and independent of men's decisions and power.

In the above cases the authors show that marriage is not the end of the world for a woman. Women can survive without husbands in their lives. That is why they portray Ramatoulaye and Amaka refusing to get married for the second time. This shows that they are not man-dependent, they have faith in their strength as women. They trust that they do not need "another person" in order for them to be whole persons. Education is important in women's lives because it gives them their independence in life. This is why Ramataulaye and Amaka move from an oppressed to a liberated, autonomous life.

Balise in Taleni's drama entitled "Nyana, nank'unyoko" has been rejected by her boyfriend and her father because of her pregnancy. She struggles for her survival until she finishes her teaching training. Her rejection and her struggling encourages her to seek for something that will not deny her independence in life, that is education.

... Lowo akazilibazisanga, ebunzimeni. ude waphumelela.

Namhlanje ngutitshalakazi kwase Qonce apho.

("Nyana. Nank'unyoko". 1997: 56).

... That one did not waste any time, she managed under difficult conditions. Today she is a teacher in King William's Town.

She survives life without men and she puts education as a priority in her life, to avoid being ruled and oppressed by a male person because she has experienced that pain and she does not want to taste it again.

In "The Joys of Motherhood" by Emecheta. Adaku. Nnaife's younger wife leaves her husband because she is not happy, as she is always reminded of not being able to give birth to boys. She becomes economically viable and independent. She sees education as a tool to save her daughters from being dependent on men. She wants her daughters to be able to survive on their own. Adaku succeeds as a single woman, as she could afford to clothe herself with expensive and beautiful clothes, things that she could not manage when she was still married to Nnaife.

Emecheta makes Adaku more successful than NnuEgo who is still under a patriarchal marriage. By doing this, she is warning women that they should not think they cannot be successful on their own.

She shows that those who are on their own could be more successful than those who stay with their husbands like NnuEgo. NnuEgo is forced to sacrifice her daughters education because she wants her boys to be educated, unlike Adaku who raises her daughters in the same way NnuEgo is raising her sons.

In Emecheta's novel "Double Yoke" Nko is involved with two men, Ikot and Ete Kamba. With Ikot, like Amaka in "One is Enough", she sleeps with him so that she can gain something, academic success. After she has delivered Ikot's child she goes back to the university and completes her degree. She sees education and her child more important things in her life than men, that is why she decides to reject both men and plans to succeed academically and professionally.

Nko accepts her child but she does not want any ensuing commitment, that is why she releases herself from both men, even from the father of her child. Emecheta shows that women do not link pregnancy with marriage. They want to own someone but they do not want to be owned by anyone, especially if this will lead to their oppression.

Debbie in Emecheta's "Destination Biafra", wants to live a life where she has indefinable value rather than being married for her parents' financial gain. She rejects marriage because she wants to reason about her own values, rather than seeing herself powerless and submissive to her husband, to her in-laws and to the African tradition. Debbie's unwillingness to get married and to have children is seen in the following quotation.

If her parents thought they could advertise her like a fatted cow, they had another thing coming. She would never agree to a marriage like theirs, in which the two partners were never equal. Her father always called the tune. She did not hate him ... she loved both her parents

very much. It was just that she did not wish to live a version of their life - to marry a wealthy Nigerian, ride the most expensive cars in the world, be attended by servants. No, she did not want that, her own ideas of independence ... had no place in that set-up. She wanted to do something more than child breeding and rearing and being a good passive wife to a man whose ego she must boost all her days, while making sure to submerge every impulse that made her a full human being.

(“Destination Biafra”. 1981: 45)

Debbie does not want to lack the independence to make decisions with her life. She wants a life where she will be able to see herself in charge of her own life. She wants a life where her thoughts cannot be taken for granted or be evaluated merely because they are those of a woman. She wants a life where her decisions will be of value like those of a man, and feels that one can get such a life outside of marriage, where a woman does not have strings attached to any man who can claim her and make decisions for her future.

Debbie rejects her lover, Alan, after she has discovered that she betrays her country by being in love with its coloniser.

I see now that Abosi and his like are still colonized. I am not like him, a black white man, I am a woman and a woman of Africa. I am a daughter of Nigeria and if she is in shame. I shall stay and mourn with her in shame. No I am not ready yet to become the wife of an exploiter of my nation ... Goodbye, Alan. I didn't mind your being my male concubine, but Africa will never again stoop to being your wife, to meet you on an equal basis,

like companions, yes, but never again to be your slave.

(“Destination Biafra”, 1981: 258)

The author is trying to show us that women are not dependent on men. There are other things that come first in their lives than to be with a man. That is why she portrays a character who views her country as a priority in her life rather than to be engaged to its oppressor.

Sissie in Aidoo’s “Killjoy” rejects marriage and prefers to have a lover instead. She has faith in herself as an African woman. She rejects love with men and she becomes herself. Sissie suffers a lot from losing her lover.

I just sat in my room and suffered ...I didn't go mad as
I feared, Allah is truly great. Something else happened
though. Loneliness became my roommate and took
the place over ... these cold countries are no places for
anyone to be by themselves ... There is a kind of loneliness
overseas which is truly bad. It comes with the cold
wind blowing outside the window making the trees moan
so. It is there in the artificial heat in the room which dried
my skin and filled my sleep with nightmares ... my lost heart,
loneliness pursued me ...

(“Our sister killjoy”, 1977: 119)

Aidoo shows her readers that it is not easy to lose someone you love, but that one needs to be strong and let go of the person and situation, just like Sissie. The frustration of losing the person you love is better than the life long misery that you might have with that person.

Nolasti, in Mothlabane's "Inkunzi ezimbini", does not want to lose her husband. She prefers to stay in a marriage that is not there rather than to leave her marriage.

Nolasti: Kanti ke indifanele nam loo nto. Singahlala
Nje mntakabawo, oku kokuba abantu bacinge
ukuba siseseamtshatweni, sekuhleliswene njalo
kakade kule mihla, andiyi kuba ngowokuqala
ndingasayi kuba ngowokugqibela.

("Inkunzi ezimbini", 1994: 70)

Nolasti: By the way this also suits me. We can just stay,
as long as people will think we are married, this
is the way it is these days, I will not be the first
one, and I will not be the last one.

In this case, Nolasti is on her own. Sigqibo finally gives her the independence she is longing for all along. She used to make decisions in her marriage, and that is not acceptable to her traditional husband. Nolasti is not different from other women without men, because her husband does not recognize her presence in his homestead. Nolasti's strength and power is of a person who can stand on her own without the help of men. But because of the traditional society she is living in, she is made to believe that to be with a husband is the best thing for a woman. Although she does not believe in this, she had to accept the situation for the sake of her child Luvuyo.

Efuru in Nwapa's novel "Efuru" did not choose her independence, but she is abandoned by her husband for another woman. She calls her mother-in-law and tells her that she cannot stay anymore.

Mother, I cannot stay anymore. A man said that he had wept for the death that killed his friend, but he did not wish that death to kill him. I cannot wait indefinitely for Adizwa, you can bear witness that I have tried my best. I am still young and would wish to marry again. It will be unfair both to you and your son if I begin to encourage men who would like to marry me while still in this house.

(“Efuru”, 1966: 88)

Efuru’s courage in leaving her marriage is embedded in the fact that she knows she is a good trader. Even before her husband abandoned her, she was the one who came with brilliant ideas about business. She knows that she is a hard working woman and that she is going to survive in her father’s homestead. Efuru was married for the second time to Gilbert (Eneberi), who in the long run marries a young wife because Efuru could not bear children. Efuru also did not stay forever in this second marriage. She decides to leave her husband because he is untrustworthy.

“I have left Eneberi” ... so here I am. I have ended where I began in my father’s house.

(“Efuru”, 1966: 218)

Nwapa challenges an African saying, that a woman’s home is where her husband is, by creating a character like Efuru who because of marriage problems, ends up in her father’s homestead on two occasions but the last one becomes a permanent stay.

In Emecheta's novel, "The joys of motherhood", Ona's life as a single woman is embedded in those powerful emotions of early childhood where her father nurtured her in a masculine manner and never gave her a chance to be a woman. That set a basic pattern and structure for her whole life. The problem that she experiences represents emotional conflicts in her life. She stays single because she grows up thinking that she is a boy. As a single woman she is strong and has much strength to cope with all life's problems, without the help of men. Instead, she is the one who gives Agbadi, her lover, strength to fight death.

Ona is a woman who derives herself from her father. She acts as a man because her ideal model at this stage is her father. Because of her father's influence she experiences no desire to get married to any man. Ona's desire to be a wife and to be a complete woman is driven into her unconscious by her father's influence. She accepts her life situation and lives without men until she dies.

Dzela in her novel entitled "Izono zakho ziyakukujikela" portrays a woman who takes the initiative to divorce her husband because of the illtreatment she receives from him. Nowam does not want to see the doors of marriage ever again. She is prepared and willing to live her life without men rather than to suffer and be illtreated by men. Nowam utters these words to her mother-in-law when she begs her not to divorce her son Mpumlo, because their children will be slaves of another man. She leaves her husband because she does not want to bring up children in a home filled with turmoil.

Soze babe zizicaka abantwana bam kuba andisafuni mzi
wumbi, wanele lo bendikuwo. ... Mama ndixolele, andisayi
kurhoxa ekuqhawuleni umtshato. AmaQocwa akhona aze
alixhamle ilifa lenu!

("Izono zakho ziyakukujikela", 1984: 62-63)

My children will never be slaves because I do not want any marriage, the one I was involved in, it is enough ... Mother forgive me, I will not change my mind in divorcing. The Qocwas are there, they must take care of your possessions.

Nowam's divorce was successful and it serves as a symbol of independence and happiness in her life. The author is demonstrating that, if a woman is not happy in her marriage, divorce is the solution rather than to wait until you get out of marriage as a corpse. Nowam feels that it is preferable for her children to live with one caring parent (her) rather than with one caring (her) and one uncaring parent (Mpumlo), as their marriage is constantly full of quarrelling and fighting. She feels that their marriage has all but broken down; this is why she saw divorce as the permanent solution to all these problems.

In most cases women are more successful when staying without men in an urban area, than in a rural area where African tradition is still practised seriously.

4.3 WORK & EMPLOYMENT

Women, in the Western world, have to earn a living in order for them and their families to survive. This may be seen as turning against African tradition which confines women to the house. These are the voices from different interviewees:

- That is impossible, I cannot stay at home and not go to work. If I can do that who is going to support me and my family.
- Yes, my husband is working, but if I can let him work alone so many things will be behind so I have to help him in one way or another.

- He does not have any problem with that, instead he is happy to have a professional wife.
- Going to work was my aim from the beginning, that is why I studied very hard so that I could get the job that I want.
- To be a female or a woman doctor, it feels good to me. This also proves people who thought only men can cope with this profession wrong.
- Yes, I am very proud of myself. I don't want to lie, I was not sure of myself when I entered medical school, I thought I am not going to cope with my studies but here I am now a young successful woman doctor.
- My profession is one of the professions which was associated with men. But I am one of the women who want to put an end to that. I am proud to say I am rated as one of the successful attorneys in this area.
- I do not work yes, I am a professional woman. I am a nurse but we have decided with my husband that I should be at home looking after the kids and help our domestic here and there.
- I am not working but I am a teacher I have a B Ped degree. with my husband's earnings we survive as if we are both working. Fetching children and taking them to play grounds is not challenging but in order for me not to be bored I am studying by correspondence.
- I believe that there is no man's and no woman's job, any work can fit any type of sex.
- I strongly support the idea of women who are employed. This also makes them independent and not burdens to their partners.

- I work because I have to look after myself and my kids as a single parent.
- I have to because my mother and my father, even my brothers and sisters depend on me.

Women experiencing western influence do encourage paid jobs and or employment amongst women. They believe that their earnings will fill the gaps in their homes. They also do not want to be burdens to their working husbands, they need independence not dependence. Even their husband or partners do encourage them to be employed so that they can share the expenses. In fact to maintain the standard of living is one of the reasons which forces both partners to have a paid job. There are cases in which a woman is not working or she is a housewife because her husband is in a highly paid job. Being a housewife does not mean she will do all the housework. There is someone who is going to be employed for that. The wife will only be involved in fetching children from school and seeing to it that everything that is needed is available, such as groceries. These voices above are also emphasised by the texts to follow.

Nolasti in Mothlabane's "Inkunzi Ezimbini" is portrayed as a woman who is opposed to the African tradition which confines women to cooking, bearing children and providing comfort for their husbands. She chooses to work hard in a white man's house so that she can support her polygamous family.

Nolasti: Kulungile Medem. Ndakubagcina
 abantwana nide nibuye
 ukuba ningaya kundibeka
 ekhaya xa nibuyile.

("Inkunzi Ezimbini", 1994:18)

Nolasti: It is okay Medem. I will
 look after the children until you
 come back if you can drop me

at home when you return.

Nolasti's aim is to work hard for more money rather than to stay at home with her husband and family. This proves her determination to work hard outside the home. She is a woman who has been influenced by western values. Nolasti ends up in a situation where she has to accept traditional beliefs because she is involved in a polygamous marriage. This develops conflict in her life. She refuses to be treated like other illiterate wives and rejects subordination. These conflicting ideologies in her life made her unacceptable to her husband, Sigqibo. This created a problem in Nolasti's marriage and she ended up separated from her husband. The author alludes to the difficulties of having to accept or to fit into a situation where one has no say. She also shows the problems that can be encountered if married people are not on the same level, especially if one of them is not willing to compromise.

Nwapa, in her novel entitled "Efuru", portrays a woman who is more interested in working hard by means of trading than in spending the rest of her time doing what women were expected to do in African traditional society.

Efuru refused to go to
the farm with her
husband. "If you like",
She said to her husband,
"go to the farm. I am not
cut out for farm work.
I am going to trade"

("Efuru", 1979:10)

Efuru does not want to be told what to do as if she does not know what she is capable of. She also objects to her husband who wants to prescribe to her the type of work she has to do. As a person she sees herself as being able to do what she wants and what she thinks is the best. The author tries to erase the African traditional work stereotype that is always associated with women. She shows how western values allow women freedom of choice concerning the type of work they want to do.

In “The slave girl” by Emecheta, Ojebeta went out with her friends to sell palm oil on the market days in order to make money. They leave behind the womens’ work which, according to their tradition, they were supposed to do. The money that they collected from trading, is spent on the family as a whole.

... On market day a group of them would
take their oil across the Niger to the Otu
waterside and sell it there for five shillings ...
and then they would spend the rest buying
soap, fish for their parents, and a head
of tobacco for the old people.

(“The slave girl”, 1995:155)

4.4 CHILDLESSNESS

The value of children is important to every culture. But African tradition takes exception if a woman cannot bear children. The blame is always put on the woman. This is what the respondents think:

- I don't have children and I am happy.
- We both went for check up with my partner. We even approached three practitioners the answer is that my partner is the one who cannot have children but under those circumstances we still intend to get married.
- I had a child but she died when she was one year but after that I couldn't have children. Yes, my husband has got children, two of them outside marriage.
- We are both confused we went to doctors and I have undergone expensive operations but nothing seems to help. My mother-in-law has just suggested that we should see the

witchdoctor, but we are still thinking about whether it is necessary to go or not.

- We are happy in our marriage although God did not give us children.
- If he is going out with other women that does not necessarily mean it is because we cannot have children, he is just doing what all men out there are doing.
- He also does not have children outside marriage.
- The doctors are still giving us hope, as they do not see anything wrong.
- I don't know whether I believe in traditional healers or not. I cannot say I am still going to approach them. The only thing I believe in is the word of God.
- Sometimes we can feel that the house does not have the warmth that it was supposed to have when there were children but our hopes keep us warm.

These responses show no negativity towards childlessness. It is viewed as something that is beyond any partner's control. Some couples take it as if maybe God is protecting them from something: that is why they can't have children.

In the above cases women who are childless do not have their womanness being devalued. It is viewed as something that is beyond any partners' control. It is also considered that men can also have problems in making children. This is evident in Magadla's "Isazela sidl'umniniso" where it is discovered that Chumani. Tozi's husband, is the one who is sterile. Phampatha, Chumani's sister, also raises a point which from the African traditional view point could be viewed as neurotic, that of asking whether Chumani has also gone for a check up.

... loo nto ngaphandle kwesizathu esicacileyo
 kuba bonke oogqirha esendikhe ndaya kubo
 bathi akukho nento le ndinayo; ndinakho

ukumfumana nanini na umntwana.

“UChumani yena?

“Utsho ukuthini kwakhe dabawo?

“Ndibuza ukuba oogqirha bathini

na kuye malunga nenzala ...

(“Isazela sidlu’ umniniso”, 1992: 57)

... Except for the clear reason because

all the doctors that I have consulted

say there is nothing wrong with me,

I can be able to get a child at any

time I want. “What about Chumani?

“What about him “dabawo”?

“I am asking that what are the doctors

saying to him concerning having children...

The reason why Phampatha happens to think this way, is that she has been influenced by western education and above all because she is a nurse. She learns and adopts the values at school and she lives according to them. In this case her awareness of both African traditions and western values does not bring about any harm to anyone but express something that is being ignored by people and also brings comfort and solutions to women who are involved in this kind of pressure in their marriages.

Chumani, on the other hand, resembles someone who has been influenced by western values. He never develops any attitude to his wife for not getting pregnant. He even goes through the nuisance of undergoing checkups in order to take the blame away from his wife. He never upholds the principles of the African tradition that always perceives a woman as being at fault. He is determined to prove that men can also be responsible for a lack of fertility in their homes.

4.5 MARRIAGE

People who believe in western values make their own decision about their marriage partners. In some African cultures there is a proverb which says: A heart chooses its own. They do not wait for their parents to make decisions for them. They take it as their right to choose the person one is going to spend most of her time with. Let us hear what these women have to say.

- To choose your own partner is the best thing that I can suggest.
- I chose my husband and he also chose me, our families supported us fully in our decisions.
- I am sorry to say that I am a jealous woman, I don't want to share my husband.
- Yho! I cannot even allow that to happen if my husband is forcing the ideas of marrying a second wife that will mean divorce between us.
- As I already said, I am not prepared to share him or to put it in other words I am a jealous woman.
- To my opinion, to have a shaky marriage or to be dumped, abandoned by your partner, does not mean your ancestors are angry or the calamity is befalling you because your marriage procedure was against your parents' views or expectations.

In the above responses we find that speakers believe in the saying which says a heart chooses its own. Modern women do not go along with polygamy or with sharing their partners. They even say those were the things of the past, and this is the nineties.

Akunna in Emecheta's "The bride price" marries the man of her dreams. She did not follow the African tradition of letting the male elders choose a husband for her. Akunna embraces western values where one marries someone he or she loves, not someone who is chosen by his or her parents because of certain qualities. Emecheta does not view Akunna's death as a

punishment because she acted against African tradition, but she holds the African traditional belief that Akunna is being punished because her bride price was not paid and she chose her husband herself as a psychological hold over the people.

So it was that Chike and Akunna substantiated the traditional superstition they had unknowingly set out to eradicate. Every girl born in Ibuza after Akunna's death was told her story, to reinforce the old taboos of the land. If a girl wished to live long and see her children's children, she must accept the husband chosen for her by her people, and if the bride price was not paid, she would never survive the birth of her first child. It was a psychological hold that existed for a very long time.

("The bride price", 1995: 176-177)

Ojebeta's husband Jacob is a man who believes in Christianity just as she does. She runs away with Jacob to Lagos because she knew that her aunt Uteh and her husband would not agree with the fact that she chose a husband for herself.

In the above books by Emecheta, she believes that it is important for a woman to choose the husband she loves by herself, so as to blame only herself if anything goes wrong.

Nwapa in her novel "Efuru" shows that Efuru is married to her first husband without her father's approval. Efuru's bride price is not even paid to her family. According to the western values there is nothing wrong with the procedure as long as those who love each other agrees. Anything that happens thereafter is not viewed as a bad omen, but is viewed as something that could happen to anyone.

In Nwapa's short story entitled "This is Lagos" she portrays Soha as a woman who got married without her parent's consent. Her husband does not even bother to pay the bride price.

Ibikunle, we don't marry like this in the
place where we come from ... mama Eze
did not finish ... Even by the place where
he comes from ... mama Bisi interrupted.
It is Lagos. When they come to Lagos they
forget their home background.

("Unwinding Threads", "This is Lagos" 1994)

The author here shows the influence of urban life on people. It encourages them to forget about their traditional customs and dance with the western music.

To have more than one wife is uncommon in the western world, which only believes in monogamous marriages. Bâ in her novel, "So long a letter" portrays two friends, Aissatau and Ramataulaye, who, because of polygamy, lost their marriages. These two women are educated and believe in western values. Ramataulaye refuses to go into a polygamous marriage with Dauda and she utters these words.

You think the problem of polygamy
is a simple one. Those who are involved
in it know the constraints, the lies, the
injustices that weigh down their consciences
in return for the ephemeral joys of change

("So long a letter", 1989:89)

Bâ discourages the practice of polygamy, especially by educated people and in urban areas. Women in this novel suffer the injustices of polygamy. But because they are strong women they choose to leave their marriages and stay without men rather than to suffer from a tradition that denies them their rights.

From an African traditional viewpoint, women are not supposed to show any jealousy towards their co-wives in a polygamous marriage. They have to see each other as a supporting system to share household chores. Each wife has to be patient and wait for her time to come.

The idea of the polygamous marriage which shows no sign of jealousy is rejected in Emecheta's "The joys of motherhood". Emecheta in this novel portrays the negative part of polygamy. Both NnuEgo and Adaku are jealous of each other. They compete using their children and their own success in trading.

... She did everything she could to make Adaku jealous of her sons. She looked for every opportunity to call the names of her children in full, telling herself she was having her own back. Minor quarrels started between the two women, and Ubani, Nwakusor and their friends were usually called in to settle the disputes.

("The Joys of motherhood", 1988:162)

NnuEgo also shows jealousy when Nnaife marries a young wife.

I don't want that girl sleeping in my bed.
I am not giving it up this time, and I don't
care what your friends say.

("The Joys of motherhood", 1988:184)

Emecheta concentrates on the misery that is evident in this kind of marriage in order to discourage people not to involve themselves in it because it creates chaos instead of happiness. The author also wants to show what issues polygamy can create, especially in an urban situation.

In “Inkunzi ezimbini”, Mothlabane portrays a polygamous family. Like Emecheta, she concentrates on the misery that results in this kind of marriage. Because Nolasti is educated she wants to do things in her own way. The author in this drama emphasizes the fact that educated or literate women are not the type of people who can marry in polygamy, because polygamy is viewed as something that is practised by illiterate people in an African traditional society. Nolasti ended up being separated from her husband because of the clash of views, as her husband believes in African tradition and she believes in western values.

4.6 WOMEN, FRIENDSHIP AND RESISTANCE

Resistance is said to be the only hope for survival. It is also mentioned that without resistance, self-love is impossible. It is posited that, because of possessing the secret of joy, women are able to speak the unspeakable. She also maintains that the secret in possessing the secret of joy is resistance. The respondents have these to say:

- Yes, I can say friendship is very important for me, maybe it is because I have supportive and loving friends.
- There are things that I cannot share with my partner that I feel comfortable to discuss with my friends.
- The reason of trusting my friend I would say it is because she is always there for me when I need her. She is a pillar of strength.
- You will find that sometimes friends are good, sometimes are bad, because of jealousy of course, besides that, I do have a friend that I trust as my confidante. Our friendship starts from our school days and no one of us has ever hurt the other intentionally or through gossiping. So, yes I trust her.

- My friend is like a sister to me. In fact she is more than a sister because we share everything.
- I strongly support women who are fighting for the rights and survival of women.
- Yes, it is the time that women are to be viewed as existing human beings, not as people who can only accept.
- I'm proud of women who, through their resistance, are being given certain positions and respect.
- I am a member of Women's League since when, I don't know but just look at my greyish hair and count back for yourself.

These women mentioned above strongly believe in the power of friendship. They trust that a friend can play the role of a counsellor in the case where one feels she does not want to carry on because of certain major problems. They also appreciate, and some are involved in the struggle for, women's liberation.

Most women writers oppose oppression, patriarchy, delusional persecution and subordination of women, by means of resistance. Brown- Guillory(1996) posits that:

Without resistance, there is a life
without joy. Without resistance,
self love is impossible. Resistance
is the only hope for survival.

In Head's novel "Maru", Margaret portrays a passive resistance towards her persecutors and those hostile to her nationality. She displays no shame in her nationality as a Masarwa.

"Excuse the question, but are you

a Coloured?" he asked. "No", she replied.

"I am a Masarwa".

("Maru", 1972:40)

Margaret is proud of being a Masarwa, because the school principal gives her the option to say she is a coloured, but she does not do so. On the day of her arrival at the village she meets Dikeledi, one of the school teachers whom she is going to work with. Even then, she has the determination to refuse to hide that she is a proud Masarwa.

I am a Masarwa. Dikeledi drew in her
breath with a sharp, hissing sound ...

"Don't mention this to anyone else,"

she said, shock making her utter strange

words. "If you keep silent about the

matter, people will simply assume you are

a coloured. I mistook you for a coloured

until you brought up the other matter..."

"But I am not ashamed of being a Masarwa..."

("Maru", 1972:24)

Margaret also suffers the humiliation of seeing herself without a bed to sleep on because she is not accepted by the community of the village. Even then she gathers up her strength and does not despair until her opposers realise that a Masarwa is just like any other person, just like them. Maru, when he marries the Masarwa, was described as a person with no standards by his villagers (1972:126).

Margaret's friendship with Dikeledi strengthens her, because Dikeledi is one of the elite people of the village. Coates (1996) states that a female relationship has as much as, or more to offer than a fulfilling human relationship. If Margaret gave up hope she would have not survived. Resistance became the only hope for her survival.

In Bâ's "So long a letter", Aissatou and Ramataulaye pull through difficult times of their lives because of their friendship and support for each other. If one is weak the other will be there helping her to carry on. They were both a pillar of strength to each other through thick and thin. Women writers in Coates (1996) argue that female friendship can be a form of resistance.

Amongst women, as Bâ indicated, power is used by the stronger to support and strengthen the weaker. Aissatou helps to lift Ramataulaye out of her despair and dependence, to make her autonomous and whole again.

Lavisa in "KuLavisa ngothando" by Taleni portrays a passive form of resistance because she does not fight or argue with anyone about her love feelings for Lunga, although people of the community are against and dislikes Lunga for the murder that they think he commits.

"O! Utsho loo delihlazo wombulali. Ngenene
iintloni zamphelela umntu esemnye ehlabathini.
Omnye umntu ebenokude asabe azifihle nasejuntwini
ukubaleka ihlazo lakhe, koko yena usuke asiqeshe
ngokungathi le Duncan yeyakhe. Akanaso nesazela
sokuba kungekho namnye ungumhlobo naye kuyo
yonke le Monti, ngaphandle kwesiya sicaka sakhe."

("KuLavisa ngothando", 1979:15)

Oh! You are talking about shameless murderer.
It is true that he lost his shame when a person
was still one on earth. Another person would
have hidden himself running away from people,
but he thinks Duncan village is his. He does
not have the guilty conscience of not having
a friend except his slave.

Lavisa even ignores Nomagugu's irritating insults because of jealousy.

“Hayi, Lavisa wasoloko wafaka lo mbala mnye welokhwe okwenkomo.” Waziva edanile uLavisa, akaphendula noko, kuba njengamntwana wasesikolweni wayeyintwazana esimilo sisulungekileyo.

(“KuLavisa ngothando”, 1979:5)

“No, Lavisa you always wear the same colour, dress like the cow.” Lavisa was very depressed but she did not answer because she is an educated person and she has a good personality.

Her resistance to Nomagugu's comments leads to her close relationship with Lunga Tanda. If she had taken Nomagugu's insult upfront Lunga would have lost the opportunity of being proved innocent. Because of possessing the secret of joy, Lavisa manages to help Lunga to clear his name as innocent in the court of law. Without her resistance there would have been no joy in Lunga's life.

Ngcobo in her novel entitled “And they didn't die” is committed as a third world woman by creating women who want to destroy the ruthlessness of colonialism against African people, especially women. According to Eze (1997) Ngcobo shows the indescribable crisis disproportionately suffered and endured by the African people in their tragic encounter with the European world. This cruel behaviour by the white government brought about a strong unity amongst women of the village and women all over the world.

The women of the village were in many ways like Mabiye-la. They were capable, they were strong. They had to be. They were lonely and afraid, therefore suspicious and prone

to gossip about each other's failures and misfortunes, outwardly, they shared a lot in common ...

(“And they didn't die”, 1990:17)

According to Braidotti (1994) it is women's movements which establish “a separatist space”, where women can speak their desires and ... shatter the silence about the exploitation they have undergone. The women in this novel fight against the brutal injustice of the white government to protect their rights as African women. They want to redress wrongs that were implemented by the prejudiced white government and they decide against passes.

“Well, it will depend on them. If they want to join the other women, they will have to give them back to BAD, give them back to the officials”. There was a silence. “Better still, we will burn the passes if they give them back to us, we will all come together and make a fire - burn them to ashes”.

(“And they didn't die”, 1990:78)

The author shows the power of women and the way they are prepared to fight for their independence. They are tired of being oppressed at home, and by the government who has put more oppression upon them. These women takes white men (police) by surprise because they think Africa is a dark continent which has no needs. They protest radically in their approach. The policemen undermines the womanness of these women by raping them in the police cells but these women does not despair and they didn't die.

... She had escaped so far, but she lived in fear, hoping and praying that no one would “spot” her and pick on her.

(“And they didn't die”, 1990:10)

They also undermines these women's Africanness by making them bathe in front of male

guards, including old women. According to the traditional custom these two groups of women, young and old, would not and could not strip and wash together. Mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law are mutually exclusive, but the guards tramples on their tradition. They shows no respect for the bodies of African women.

These women are protesting against oppression. They want to bury the oppressive laws that deprive them of their husbands and their loved ones. It is because of this capitalist system that Jezile has to suffer childlessness because she could only meet her husband once in six or in twelve months.

We live all our lives without the help of our men and when they are useless we must receive them back and care for them ... We blame them, but really it is the government that is to blame ... when our men get lonely out there they meet other women and new families grow and we are forgotten.

(“And they didn’t die”, 1990:43)

The author also raises the point that the African families were also deprived by the government of the privilege to generate families, by taking their men from them. Government opposes God’s words which he uttered to the first human pair, Adam and Eve, that:

Have many children, so that your descendants will live all over the earth and bring it under their control.

(“Good News Bible”, 1994:4)

The author is committed to show the readers the way African women have suffered and the way they have tried to fight against the unjust laws imposed on them by the Government. These women were also prepared to sacrifice their families and go to the womens’ meetings and leave behind their work at home waiting for them.

Bâ in her novel, “So long a letter”, addresses the fact that women have the right to be involved

in the decision making of their country as they are part of it, but that the Government and men deprive them of this. This is seen from Ramataulaye's words to Dauda:

We have a right, just as you have, to education which we ought to be able to pursue to the furthest limits of our intellectual capacities. We have a right to equal opportunities ... When will we have the first female minister involved in decisions concerning the development of our country ? .. when will education be decided for children on the basis not of sex but of talent?

(“So long a letter”, 1989 : 61)

In this case the author is raising the point that women have all the ability to do what a man can do for his country. Women should no longer be decorative accessories or objects to be moved about; they are the nation's primary, fundamental root and they must be encouraged to take part in the destiny of the country as they also hold equal qualifications to men who hold certain positions.

4.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter portrayed a role played by women in the western society. It also brought forward the fact that women can stand on their own without the help of men. The discussion above give strength to those women who think their lives depends on others. It shows that every one has got his/her life in his hands. Women characters in this discussion have the courage of sorting their lives themselves.

This chapter also proves that some women can be pillars of strength for one another as their friendship is sometimes constructive not destructive. It is also mentioned that enlightened women have a chance to choose the partners that they will spend their lives with. This all goes with western civilization because in a traditional society, it is the duty of the parents to take a lifetime decision for their children. In this chapter women are being freed for having always

feeling guilty of bareness, men are also made aware that infertility between partners must not only be pointed on women but also to them on equal bases. In a western society women are given a chance to work for their families, that is ,both men and women are working so that they can be able to share their family expenses when the month end comes. Each ones contribution is being valued equally.

CHAPTER 5**THE VOICES OF AFRICAN WOMEN WRITERS****5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will explore the different voices of African women writers. Their concern will be divided into different sub-topics, to be discussed below. These voices show their commitment to stop the silencing of African women and to tell the world about themselves and how they feel about certain issues. This chapter will also focus on different experiences from different points of view. Some of their views are still focussing on a submissive approach to life but some are untying such act to the new world. We will be focussing on women from all over Africa, that is, from Eastern, Western, Northern and Southern Africa. Some of their views are regional, and some are common in most African areas.

The discussion in this chapter is not an end in itself, but it brings forward important suggestions to be considered. It also encourages Xhosa women writers to take a new turn in writing and to focus on the things that affect them, just like women in Western Africa. That does not mean they will be turning against their African tradition but they will portray respect for their womanhood by expressing their concerns in life, by writing. The discussion will be based on various texts by different African women writers.

I should like to open my discussion with the following quotation by Emecheta, (1988:186):

God , when will you create a woman who will be
fulfilled in herself, a full human being, not
anybody's appendage?

Black women's realities, concerns, and analyses are being brought to attention today by their political activism globally, and by their artistic and written expression (Braxton and Mc Laughlin 1990).

Traditionally , the world of black literature has been a world of black men's literature. The fathers of black writing have been men and the male authors have committed themselves by portraying male heroes and male protagonists. The complexity and vitality of the black female experience have been fundamentally ignored. The presentation of women in African literature has been left almost entirely to male voices, to name but a few: Achebe, Ngugi, Laye, Armah, Tamsanqa, Mtingane, Jordan and Sinxo. These male writers, who have presented the African woman largely within the traditional milieu, have generally communicated a picture of a male dominated and male oriented society, and the satisfaction of the women has been taken for granted. Male writers have portrayed women who complacently continue to fulfil the roles expected of them by their society and to accept the superiority of the men.

Today, African women writers are committed to make the woman's world acceptable to, and respected by, both women and males. African women writers heard the voices of black women when they moaned and sang while tending fields, washing clothes, preparing food, and caring for their kin, and combined those voices into books such as novels, drama and poetry. These women writers fought against the silencing of women. They felt committed to leave evidence containing truth about themselves, so that it could be passed on through generation to generation. This means that the truth about their womanhood will stay for many, many years to come.

Contemporary black women writers, and many of their heroines, have gone deeply into themselves to discover who they are, to urge forth a voice too long silenced by a male centred literary tradition, and to heal wounds inflicted by racism, oppression, and indifference (Gabb in Braxton and McLaughlin, 1990).

African women writers are committed in their writing. They seek self-respect through songs and literature writing. They also want respect from others, especially men. Many African women write about social and political issues and about women's domestic and personal lives, physical and intellectual, and about their experiences in life.

They are also committed to their womanhood. In their writing they encourage other women to value the vision of womanhood that clearly challenges prevailing notions of femininity. Women writers are also committed as third world people, where they are politically conscious, offering readers perspectives on, and perceptions of, colonialism.

They are also committed to wash away the stereotypes given to them by society that are visible and emphasised in men's literature. Women writers like Bâ, Emecheta, Mothlabane, Ngcobo, Nwapa, Aidoo, Dazela, Swartbooi, Magadla are seriously challenging those stereotypes in their works of art.

The picture of the cheerful, contented female complacently accepting her lot is replaced by that of a woman who is powerfully aware of the unfairness of the system and who longs to be fulfilled in herself, to be a full human being, not merely somebody else's appendage.

According to Hernton in Braxton and McLaughlin (1990:205):

For the first time, the status of black women writers is no longer relegated below the status of the males. Black women writers are taking the initiative. Instead of being constrained by and secondary to the literature dominance of black males, the literature of the women is expansive and liberating. Unlike the past, when women were supposed to be seen but not heard, the women of today have become recognized writers in all fields and genres.

Cixous (1981a) contends that to write is an act which will not only "realize" the decensored relation of woman to her sexuality, to her womanly being, giving her access to her native strength, it will also her back her goods, her pleasures, her organs, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal. Cixous is relatively optimistic about the possibility of transforming the patriarchal symbolic order through giving women a new sense

of themselves. In the struggle to reassert feminine values, feminine writings which draw on the unconscious, are a key "site" for bringing about change. The heart of this chapter therefore, now consider different texts written by African women writers.

5.2 WOMANHOOD

According to Amadiume (1987), in contrast to boys, when a girl showed signs of womanhood - menstruation and developing of breasts - her movements were curtailed and she was closely watched. She could no longer wander off into the forest to pick nuts and berries with other children. Mothers had an ambivalent attitude towards the physical maturity of their daughters. On the one hand they were pleased, for soon their daughter would be married and have children with all the material benefits of the in-law relationship.

The womanhood stage is the most important stage that a woman is supposed to enjoy and look forward to. At this stage, a young adult begins to sense a feeling of her own identity, the feeling that one is a unique human being and yet prepared to fit into some meaningful role in society, whether this role is adjustive or innovating. This is a time in life when one wishes to define what one is at the present and what one wants to be in the future (Hall and Lindzey, 1978).

Emecheta in her novel entitled "The bride price", portrays patriarchal vampirism and how it devalues the woman's most valuable stage. In this regard the author shows through her story that women, especially in a traditional homestead, are powerless, they have no womanly or mother / daughter relationship when their daughters reach womanhood (menstruation). This privilege is taken from them by men or husbands who make this stage a stage that will bring torture to women, by marrying them to husbands that they do not approve of so that the men can receive a bride price, or to put it in other words, so that they can be wealthy. This is proved by Osenekwu's words to his mother.

Akunna is going to marry a rich man, said Osenekwu between mouthfuls of pounded yam and egusi soup. He on repeating the sentence, as if to convince himself that that was how it would be. Akunna was going to marry a rich man and raise the entire Odia family from poverty to wealth.

(“The bride price”. 1995:77)

As the onset of menstruation, depending on a woman’s condition and the class of her family, she is capable of securing the promised bride price for its owner. In Akunna's case, her deceased father's brother, Okonkwo Odia, by his right as Ezekiel Odia's inheritor has taken Ma Blackie as his fourth wife (edited by Brown- Guillory: 1996).

Akunna, unlike other women in her village, sees a need for her to have a bath when she is having her periods: this is why she uses the water her brother presumes is for his use. In this case Emecheta questions the custom that women have to stay unclean during their menstrual periods, because this is one of the ways to make them uncomfortable and not to desire for their womanhood to come.

Because of the difficult transition from childhood to adulthood, on the one hand, and a sensitivity to social and historical change, on the other, Akunna suffers more deeply than ever before or ever again from a confusion of roles, or identity confusion. When she is told by Chike that she is bleeding, emptiness and fear come into her mind - she knows the responsibilities that are attached to the situation. She also knows that she has to take important decisions, but she is unable to do so because her family and society are going to force her to marry someone without being given a chance to make her own decision about the man she is to marry. This is one of the reasons that makes Akunna reluctant to tell her mother that she has started menstruating.

... Then he suddenly stopped, and called out sharply, Akunna! You are bleeding, there is blood on your dress ... Akunna ... she knew the responsibility that

went with it. She was now fully grown. She could be married away, she could be kidnapped, a lock of her hair could be cut by any man to make her his wife forever.

(“The bride price”, 1995:94)

Chike's anima archetype motivates him to understand Akunna's entrance to womanhood by being more supportive to her than Akunna's biological mother, who is blinded by patriarchal rule.

Akunna ... can you keep quiet about this? Don't tell anyone yet, not till after the exam ... after school, I will go down to Onitsha and buy you a packet (pads). You must hide it, and keep it safe and clean.

(“The bride price”, 1995:95-96).

On the scene of her first bleeding, Akunna is concerned with how Chike will look at her, and she displays feelings of embarrassment. But those feelings are erased by the warm welcome into womanhood that Chike displays to her. In this case the author shows how some men affected by the western world treat women who reach the stage of menstruation. They are unlike traditional men, who link woman's blood with wealth (as Osenekwu observed above).

What should she do now - run. run as far as possible from this man, and never let him see her again? She was intensely annoyed by his presence. How dare he see her in this shameful state? But would it have been any better if her mother or one of those boys had been the first to know?

(“The bride price”, 1995:94)

Emecheta links the idea of forcing a woman to get married for gain with the traditional point of view. Chike as a teacher is more westernised, that is why he does not perceive Akunna as a commodity to be sold but as someone who needs to be cared for. Akunna and Chike reject

the traditional values and ideals of society as interpreted to the child by its parents. Their superego demonstrates the modern values and ideals of western society; that is why Akunna does not want to be married to a man she does not love nor know. Chike's background of being born and bred in a slave family does not make any difference to her, what comes first to her mind is love. They both introject the moral standards of their parents.

Weisstern's essay in Jones and Olson (1991) posits that women like NnuEgo in "The joys of motherhood", MaBlackie in "The bride price" and Tozi in Magadla's novel "Isazela sidl'umniniso" would like first and foremost to be womanly companions of men and to be mothers and that they are committed to take care of human infants. This is revealed in NnuEgo's words to her first husband, Amatokwu.

I am sure the fault is on my side. You do everything right.
 How can I face my father and tell him that I have failed?
 I don't like going there these days because his wives always
 rush out to greet me hoping that I am already carrying a child.
 You can see the disappointment on their faces.

("The joys of motherhood", 1988:31)

In Magadla's novel Tozi also blames herself when they can't conceive children.

...UTozi waba namathuba okubhaqeka ehleli yedwa eceba
 ukuzeyelisela kwisizibakazi esikhulu seengcingane wayesithi
 akubuzwa ngakucingayo ngumyeni wakhe akhanyele alale
 ngomhlana esithi akukho nto ingako noko.

("Isazela sidl'umniniso", 1992 :21)

...Tozi sometimes was seen engaged in deep thoughts.
 When her husband asks her about what she is thinking
 about, she will deny it totally.

In this novel the author tells us that it is not always a woman who is barren in a relationship but men can be barren also, as in the case of Chumani, who, because of the mumps that he had when young, cannot have children.

... Watyatyadula emcacisela ukuba esinye soonobangela weso sifo wayenaso nguqwilikana othi ukuba ukhe wamhlasele eseligatyana owasebuhlanti uvelise isiphumo esinjengeso sasifumaniseke kuChumani.

(“Isazela sidl’umniniso”, 1992 :60)

... He explained telling him that one of the diseases he had is mumps which if it happens to attack a young guy comes up with results like these (sterility)

A medical checkup of men in cases like these does not happen in traditional societies, which is why women suffer blame for the rest of their married lives. But in western societies it is known that if partners cannot have children, both partners must go to see a doctor for a checkup. Traditional beliefs oppress women all their lives, even if they are innocent.

Richardson and Robinson (1993) state that to become a mother is to do what women and those around you expect and want you to do. In order for MaBlackie to be happy in her new marriage, she has to give a child to her new husband; that is why she becomes pregnant by Okonkwo.

She knew that MaBlackie would let Okonkwo have his way, now that he had made her dream of being a mother once more come true.

(“The bride price”, 1995:127)

The pressure that these women experience from their mothers in their families and from their mothers-in-law affects their emotions and their way of thinking. In Magadla's novel, “Tozi”

in order to overcome the pressure from her mother-in-law about her childlessness she decides to sleep with another man and it is after that, that she discovers that she is pregnant. She lies to her husband and she pretends as if the child is his. But unfortunately for her by that time he already knew that he was the one who was barren, not her, and that was the beginning of their marriage problems, until Chumani decides to take his life. He leave a letter for Tozi explaining everything about his sickness.

Tozi,

Ndithatha olu hambo ngenjongo yokubaleka inyaniso .

Ndiyazi ukuba isilingo nesono owangena kuso wangeniswa ubukhulu becala ngabazali bam, ingakumbi umama.

... Isazela endinaso sokuba yonke le minyaka usihla unyuka emagqirheni ulunywa ziintelezi, utshotshozelelwa yimihlabelo ukrakrelwa nangamayeza, oyena mntu ongenayo inzala ndim. Ngenxa yeso sizathu, nangenxa yokuba ndizive ndingenakho ukuhlala ndiphile ubom obupheleleyo njenganga phambili nawe ndisazi mhlophe ukuba olo sana uluphetheyo aluzalwa ndim, esi sigqibo sifanelekile .

(“Isazela sidl’umniniso”. 1992:89)

Tozi ,

I am taking this journey with the hope of running away from the truth. I know that the trouble and temptation that you ended up in was because of my parents, especially my mother. ... I have a guilty conscience that all these years you were going up and down to traditional healers experiencing difficult and painful moment of sour medicines and itching leaves but I am the one who can-

not get children. Because of that reason, I have decided that I cannot stay and live a whole life as before with you knowing very clearly that the child you are carrying is not my child, this decision is the best.

In this case Magadla warns people out there that if the couple does not bear children the blame should not be put on the woman, but that both partners must be checked.

Amrouche in her story "My mother; My mother-in-law". shows us the western African view that men can be irresponsible, they like to run away from their responsibility.

A young man who was a member of her former husband's clan lived in the family courtyard. He loved her. She loved him. And what had to happen, happened. She became pregnant, but the young man denied that he was the father of her child.

(‘Unwinding Threads’: ‘My mother’ ‘My mother-in-law’, 1994:180)

The man's denial gives another impression of the woman. The mere fact that he denies his responsibility gives the impression that the woman had other sexual partners than him. This man degrades this woman because he does not want to accept or to face his responsibility. She experiences a painful childbirth because she has no one to help her to deliver the child:

The night I was born, my mother was in bed with her two children. No one came near there to help or to bring aid

She gave birth alone and cut the umbilical
cord with her teeth.

(“Unwinding Threads” “My mother My mother-in-law”, 1994:181)

This woman shows strength and power in a the time when she is supposed to be weak and powerless because of labour pains and blood loss. But because she values the life of her new born, he gave herself up for the sake of the child. This shows how childbirth is important to women: she has tried to protect the child for nine months in her womb. So she does not want to lose it when the moment of truth has come. The man’s behaviour shows the weakness and dishonesty that men hold, and the strength, love and honesty that women can show to their children.

NnuEgo in Emecheta’s “The joys of motherhood” finds it difficult to leave behind one of her youngest daughters the day she returns back home from Lagos. The reason for this reluctance is that Obiageli plays an important role in giving her entry into womanhood, by being her child.

... NnuEgo replied with tears in her eyes , " I don't know how to be anything else but a mother, How will I talk to a woman with no children? Taking the children from me is like taking away the life I have always known, the life I am used to.

(“The joys of motherhood”, 1988:212)

The author here emphasises women 's commitment to their motherhood and the fact that children are the key to their womanhood. NnuEgo never had a chance to build friendship with other women: her only concern in life was the joy of being a mother.

She had never really made many friends, so busy had she been building up her joys as a mother ... the joy of being a mother was the joy of giving all to your children, they said.

(“The joys of motherhood”. 1988:224)

In the above quotation Emecheta conveys the message to mothers that as mothers they have to sacrifice all they have for the joy, well being, survival of their children. and that will mean real motherhood and true love for their children.

Amadiume (1987:78) claims that:

As the culture stressed and glorified maternity, so did the women stress their power and importance as the bearers of children. They claimed that they were principal, for without them would not be born.

We have noticed from the discussion above that womanhood stage is one of the difficult stages that most or all women have to face. The only thing that is needed is for them (women) to have strength and courage to carry on, and most of all they (women) should value and love their womanhood so that other people who seems to undermine them can learn not to do so.

5.3 LOVE

Emecheta is committed to tell her readers that love as it is viewed in the West is a dual commitment, not a one sided commitment. As indicated by Jones and Olson (1991) love is the contract of our patriarchal culture, it is synonymous with the kind of submissive, ego boosting behaviour which women are expected to show men, but not vice versa. To a man like Chike in Emecheta’s “The bride price”, a Westernised person, love is supposed to come from both angles, not from one side. He proved this by showing his true love to Akunna, and even confessed to his father that he loves Akunna more than anything and he is not prepared to lose her. The above statement in James and Olson more accurately fits the men in a traditional

society or who are traditionalists. Generally these men view themselves as “heads” of the family or of the house. They do not show love for their women or wives but they want to control them and make them their sex objects, who cannot complain of anything. This is demonstrated in Emecheta's novel, entitled “ The joys of motherhood” when Nnaife, a traditional man, reprimands Adaku, his younger wife.

You have become worse since your child died - you're
spreading your bitterness all over. Don't I sleep with you?
What else do you want?

(“The joys of motherhood”, 1988:134)

This quotation shows no sense of love but it displays patriarchal culture and its view of women as sex objects. This is also displayed in “The bride price” on the night of the day when Akunna celebrates her womanhood, when Akunna is attacked by a man called Okoboshi who squeezes her breasts very painfully.

Without warning, Okoboshi walked up to Akunna
and seized her roughly at the back of her shoulder,
he grabbed at both her breasts and started to squeeze
and hurt her.

(“The bride price”, 1995:124)

Mbekeni and Ntloko in their drama entitled “Bhut' Lizo Ndixolele” portray women as people that men can rely on, that is, they can be trusted, but that men cannot be trusted. This is seen in Nonzwakazi's words after she approves Monde as her lover.

Nonzwakazi: Nina bafana niyasiblafa gqitha kanti, thina
siyazinikezela kuni xa sithe sanamkela ... Ewe yuu! ndinga-
bathini abantu ababini kaloku? (Bhut' Lizo ndixolele, 1979:17)

Nonzwakazi: You guys you are bluffing us but we give you all our heart when we accepted you ... Yes what! what can I do with two people (Guys)?

Men are portrayed in their totality by these authors, that they must not be trusted because they do not practise what they preach. Monde has promised Nonzwakazi the whole world and even promised her that he would never love any woman except her. But we find him begging for Mandisa's love and he even assures her about his love for her.

Monde: Ndicel'uthando lwakho mntakwethu yaye ndinyanisile xa nditshoyo. Musa ukuyithabatha lula loo nto ... kanti nguwe wedwa sana. Akusayi kuva wumbi apha kwa-Nokholeji, naphi na.

(“Bhut'Lizo ndixolele”, 1979:21)

Monde: I am asking for your love, my sister, and I am truthful when I say that. Don't take that easy ... because you are the only baby. You will never hear of anyone here at the college and anywhere.

At this stage Monde denies his commitment to Nonzwakazi. Men can be interpreted as hypocrites who need not be trusted when it comes to love. The author warns women out there to live their lives and that they must not be dependent on men. Mandisa discovers that Monde is engaged to Nonzwakazi but Monde does not tell the truth. He denied that those were his plans (to marry Nonzwakazi): he said they were his parents' plans.

In this case love serves as women's oppression. Firestone (1979) indicates that because patriarchy has more power over women who are more submissive to men's love, love cannot be based upon equality but it reflects women's dependency, as in the case of Nonzwakazi and Mandisa who are both dependent on Monde's love. Although they were reluctant at first, Monde's sweet tongue made them have more trust in him.

Dazela (1984) in her introduction pages quotes the following English author's words to emphasise the fact that women are good lovers and good friends but that men play around with them.

Men kick friendship about like a foot ball, women nurse and guard it like a treasure, yet it slips out of their hands, and crashes into fragments.

Sutherland in her short story entitled "New life at Kyere-faso" portrays a woman who only loves a man who is a hard worker and who uses his mind and hands in order for the people to benefit. Foruwa is not being controlled by man's power and she also does not admire a man who is lazy. She categorises men like this as people who are lost and as people who do not know nothing in life. She does not view them as men because they cannot do anything for themselves and their families.

Foruwa dedicates her love to a man who is hard working and progressive in life, a man who can share something valuable with other people in order to build and encourage them, a man who is able to influence people in order for them to survive. Through Foruwa's choice and ambitions we were able to see that she is a responsible person. The author is trying to tell women that they must not be blinded by empty love but should rather look for fruitful love. Foruwa utters these words to her mother:

Mother, I do not find him here ...
He with whom this new life shall be built.
He is not here mother. These men's faces
are empty, there is nothing in them, nothing
at all.

("Unwinding Threads": "New life at Kyere-faso",
1994:22)

Foruwa eventually gains the man of her life who says to her mother:

Greetings, mother, replied the stranger
quietly. I am a worker. My hands are
all I have to offer your daughter, for
they are all my riches. I have travelled
to see how men work in other lands.
I have that knowledge and my strength...
People of Kyerefaso change to be better
people because of Foruwa's husband.
No more wars. They learn to be creative.

(“Unwinding Threads”: “New life at
Kyerefaso”,1994:23-24)

Foruwa's mother's flexibility, to allow her child to choose her husband herself, shows that she is not bound by patriarchy and by African traditional principles.

5.4 PATRIARCHY

Akunna is engaged in patriarchy's psychic and societal repression of women because her maternal being is being disconnected by the phallic order so that she (Akunna) could serve the basic reproductive needs of the culture and its economic needs, as her body is viewed as an object of sexual pleasure to men.

By portraying a Westernized character like Chike who shows a western view of love, Emecheta challenges the sexual abuse of women by traditional customs. Chike saves Akunna from Okoboshi's attack by beating him.

All at once the self control that Chike had been taught
in years of staying with missionaries left him. He struck
Okoboshi a full frontal blow. He added another, and

another, waiting for the other rivals to come and fight him in defence of their friend, but he was surprised to see that nobody came forward.

(“The bride price”, 1995:124)

By the mere fact that none of the rivals fight Chike, the author shows that Okoboshi's act should be abolished: it is uncalled for. But to the reader's surprise, Akunna's mother does not understand why Akunna could not let Okoboshi play with her breast. Menstrual blood, that is supposed to build a strong relationship between Akunna and her mother Ma Blackie, instead separates them because of patriarchal and cultural customs. It destroys the bond between mother and daughter instead of intensifying it.

You mean you have nice breasts and don't want men to touch? Girls like you tend to end up having babies in their father's house because they cannot endure open play, so they go to secret places and have themselves disvirgined.

(“The bride price”, 1995:125)

Ma Blackie, Akunna's mother, found herself deeply immersed in the Okonkwo family politics. As indicated by Brown- Guillory (1996), the very least Ma Blackie can do is to make Akunna fit enough to obtain a healthy bride price. Brown- Guillory continues that women who have many daughters console and congratulate themselves in terms of the expensive bride prices these daughters might bring.

Ma Blackie is a victim of patriarchy because she is not educated and she is not economically viable. She has to bow to Okonkwo and accept whatever he says as her owner. She also, as Chodorow indicates, repeats her own history as a child.

Emecheta uses Akunna to undermine patriarchal culture or customs on the day when Akunna is kidnapped by Okoboshi's family. Akunna is supposed to sleep with her "so called husband, Okoboshi", and they are given a white towel which is going to be the symbol of Akunna's virginity, as it has to be stained with Akunna's blood.

On the centre of the bed was a white towel, foreign-made, judging from its softness. That was to be one of the presents her mother would receive in the morning, stained with the blood she was going to shed on being disvirgined.

("The bride pride", 1995:140)

Akunna never allows patriarchy and submissiveness to rule or to destroy her future. She makes use of a plan which is viewed by traditionalists as an act of Western people. She pretends as if she has already slept with Chike, and her "so called husband" gets annoyed, beats her up and rejects her. This is what Akunna is looking forward to, because she knows very clearly that her destiny is with Chike. Chike tries his best to take Akunna out of her misery and he manages to do so.

Like Emecheta, Bâ in her novel entitled "So long a letter", through Aissatou's words, shows the importance of a woman's body, and she also emphasises the fact that women should learn to value their bodies. She challenges the male African tradition that woman's body is for sex, nothing else.

All the same, I insist that my daughters be aware of the value of their bodies. I emphasize the sublime significance of the sexual act, an expression of love. The existence of means of contraception must not lead to an unhindered release of desires and instincts.

("So long a letter", 1989:87)

In Bâ's short story entitled "Rejection", edited by Bruner, she reveals that every road has thorns in it. This is seen from the disappointment that these women friends, Ramatalonye and Aisatou, receive from their husbands. Their husbands marry other women and Ramatalonye and Aisatou both leave their marriages, because they cannot see themselves in a polygamous marriage and they decide to trust themselves and their strength and be on their own. This was not an easy decision for Ramatalonye but she gains the courage from her friend Aisatou, who had experienced this situation before her. Ramatoulaye utters these words to her friend:

I also know that marriage is never
smooth.

("Unwinding Threads": "Rejection" 1994:38)

The author also displays the commitment that women show in their marriages. But because of circumstances they are forced to undo their commitment. This is seen in Ramataloye's words:

... Even though I understand your stand,
even though I respect the choice of liberated
women, I have never conceived of happiness
outside marriage ...

("Unwinding Threads": "Rejection", 1994:38)

From the above quotation we find that Ramatalonye is not too sure of herself. But the author makes it clear that she will enjoy life more without her husband. The author shows the world that marriage is a very important thing in one's life but it is also very crucial for a person to choose her or his life partner by herself. Ramatalonye utters harsh words to her husband's brother who, she is mourning, sees her only as a woman to be married to another man (him).

You forget that I have a heart, a mind,
that I am not an object to be passed
from hand to hand. You don't know
what marriage means to me, it is an act

of faith and of love, the total surrender
 of oneself to the person one has chosen
 and who has chosen you. (My emphasis.)

(“Unwinding Threads”: “Rejection”, 1994:40-41)

This quotation reveals the fact that women have feelings just like any other human being and their feelings need to be respected.

In traditional African culture it is the old women who ensure that patriarchal traditions are enforced and reproduced. Okoboshi 's mother and her female relations in Emecheta's “The bride price” give a white towel to Okoboshi in order for him to sleep with Akunna. They even assure Akunna with a smile that it won't be painful.

The others laughed at the grimace on her face, and again
 assured her that it would not be painful and that Okoboshi
 had been particularly instructed to be gentle with her.

(“The bride price”, 1995:140)

Emecheta and Magadla reveal the point that women, especially traditional women, oppress other women simply because they were oppressed in the same way, in fact they always want to make it worse for the other person. It is patriarchy which caused women to be different: instead of celebrating their unity together as women, they live in the shadows of men also.

Taleni in her drama entitled “Nyana Nank’unyoko”, shows the patriarchal world and its destructions, how it is capable of destroying someone's future, especially that of a woman. Langa Balise's father chases Balise away when he discovers that Balise is pregnant while she is still at the university.

Langa: ... makahambe lo mntwana makahambe, uza kufundisa abantwana bam ukungcola. Makahambe angabe azibize ngegama lam.

(“Nyana, Nank'unyoko”.1997:19)

Langa: ... This child must leave, she must leave, she is going to teach my children dirty things. She must go and she must never call herself after my name.

After she has been chased away by her father she goes to her boyfriend, Tamsanqa. Tamsanqa rejects her and tells her to go away.

Tamsanqa: Balisa Ludidi uva xa kusithiwani? Andikufuni qha qwaba, yaye andifuni kukubona phambi kwamehlo am, nam ungasoze uphinde undibone ekuphileni. Nants' indlel' imhlophe, Xwaya imigodlo yakho ulahleke (utsho eval 'ifestile ebuyela emandlalweni wakhe engenaso nesa-zela yintlungu akuyo uBalise, ome wema wade ngelikade wancama wahamba.

(“Nyana, Nank 'unyoko”, 1997:21)

Tamsanqa: Balise Ludidi, you listen when one says what? I do not want you that is all, and I do not want to see you before my eyes, and you are not going to see me in life. There's the way it is clear, take all your luggage and disappear. (He uttered those words closing the window and he went back to bed without any guilty conscience about Balise's pain, who stood and stood there until she gave up.)

Balise experiences a very difficult time, a very frustrating motherhood to be. Because her mother is a woman she does not have the power to stop her husband from chasing her away. Balise is being rejected twice, first by her father and secondly by her boyfriend. but she does not despair. The author tells us that men, because of the status that is attributed to them by traditional society, that of headship, are capable of making women's motherhood a nightmare. It is not women who hate motherhood, but the pressure that they have from their male counterparts causes them to choose not to have children rather than to suffer rejection. Some women, like Balise, because of suffering end up dumping their children on other people's door steps, not because they hate their children but because they can't maintain them alone.

Langa views himself as the "head of the house" and no one can contest his word. Tamsanqa, on the other hand, makes Balise feel powerless by practising his powers over her. The social and economic power of men can be destructive to the lives of many women and to their newly born babies. As Weedon (1987:54) maintains:

Men by virtue of their penis can aspire to a position of power and control within the symbolic order.

Taleni is committed to telling other women that they should not play around with their education because it is the key to their success in life and it can give them independence in life. Emecheta in her novel "The joys of motherhood", also shows the patriarchal destruction and rejection of a woman in a destructive way. Amatokwu, like Tamsanqa in Taleni's drama, rejects NnuEgo as he rejects a stinking rat.

Amatokwu asked. "I am a busy man. I have no time to waste my precious male seed on a woman who is infertile. I have to raise children for my line. If you really want to know, you don't appeal to me anymore. You are dry and jumpy".

("The joys of motherhood", 1988:32)

5.5 VALUE OF CHILDREN

Brown-Guillory (1996) argues that favouritism towards sons damages not only daughters but also society. Swartboo in her novel entitled "UMandisa" challenges favouritism of sons over daughters by depicting a powerful female character, Mandisa who is portrayed as a treasure at her home and also pursues her education until she becomes a professional teacher. The author proves the value of giving birth to a girl, which is to give birth to a brighter future, not only for that individual's future or her family but for the community as a whole, because Mandisa became a teacher and she uplifts the standard of her people.

"Umzukulwana wam ndifuna abe nguMandisa igama lakhe, mntwana wam. Kaloku kumnandi kakhulu kum, kuba ufumene intombi, kuba mna ndafumana amadoda odwa", watsho uMam - Cirha, ethetha namolokazana wakhe.

("UMandisa", 1975:14)

"I want my granddaughter's name to be Mandisa. This is the happiest moment to me, that you have got a daughter, because I gave birth to men only". says MamCira to her daughter-in-law.

If it had happened that Mandisa's mother or her grandmother had developed a negative attitude to their daughter, Mandisa's future and that of the society would have missed the brilliant opportunity that Mandisa brought to her family and to her community. The author warns us not to judge our children because we do not know what the future holds for them. This is why Bond in her interview by Rohrbaugh (1981) says that although she was born with a vagina, it does not mean she must be judged by it. Mandisa's family, including her father, did not identify Mandisa by the small space (vagina) but deals with the whole of her and what she is about.

Like Swaartbooi, Emecheta celebrates the birth of a daughter in her novel "The bride price". Before Akunna dies her husband Chike tells her that they have given birth to a baby girl. Akunna's reaction was so positive that she asked her husband to name their daughter after the bed they have conceived her on, that is, she must be named "Joy". Her husband joyfully agrees because their daughter's birth did not bring sadness in their lives but joy.

What did we have? "A little girl", he replied in her ear.
 Then a kind of inner glow, that seemed to defy even
 death to quench it, spread over her young and tired features.
 Her sense of humour came back, and she boasted, with
 so much force, in fact with all the force left in her body.
 "I told you so. I told you that I would not keep our love
 a secret. Now with our little girl, everybody will know how
 passionately we love each other. Our love will never die ...
 let us call her joy too, the same name we gave to the bed
 on which she was conceived".

("The bride price". 1995:176)

In a traditional African society there is a belief that when you give birth to a girl you are killing that family's line. Swaartbooi and Emecheta disagree with this, by showing Westernized people joyfully giving birth to daughters. Swaartbooi's approval in the above quotation is heard in the words "Kaloku kumnandi kakhulu kum, kuba ufumene intombi", (This is a happiest moment to me that you have given birth to a girl). Emecheta's emphasis is found in the following line: "Our love will never die..."

Emecheta in her novel, "The joys of motherhood", created a traditional family which is opposed to the Westernized families discussed above. In this case the birth of a girl is discredited by women because they want to serve the interests of patriarchy (their husband and societal interests). "It is not them (women) who does not approve or who are talking, but their men (husbands) inside them".

"Hm, I know, but I doubt if our husband will like them very much. One can hardly afford to have one girl in a town like this, to say nothing of two".

(“The joys of motherhood”, 1988:126-127).

In the same novel Emecheta demonstrates the fact that it is the power of men and African tradition that disgraces women who have girls. This is discovered in NnuEgo and Adaku's conversation when NnuEgo is worried about her giving birth to girls.

“Oh, senior wife, I think you are sometimes more traditional than people at home in Ibuza ... I think it's due to my father's influence.

(“The joys of motherhood”, 1988:127)

The author shows that the traditional preference for sons leads to some strong consequences since it has disturbing effects on the psyche of not just the women but some of the men as well.

Swaartbooi and Emecheta challenge the devaluation of females in their books by introducing Westernisation, which proves that it is traditionalism that puts an emphasis on devaluation of girls. Adaku, NnuEgo's co-wife, is made to feel inferior because she has no sons and she is made to feel that she has no right to complain even if she is in a position to do so. The reason for the unjust behaviour is that NnuEgo has sons and Adaku has none.

Nwakusor reminded her. "Our life starts from immortality and ends in immortality. If Nnaife had been married to only you, you would have ended his life on this round of his visiting earth. I know you have children but they are girls, who in a few year's time will go and help build another man's immortality.

(“The joys of motherhood”, 1988:166)

Let Oganda die for people,
and for her ancestors ...

(“Unwinding Threads”: “The Rain Came”,
1994:99)

Adaku as an ambitious and enlightened person values her daughters in such a way that she is prepared to work hard for them in order that they can have a better education that will help them to provide for their needs in future. Adaku is committed to see the well being of her children (girls), going somewhere instead of marrying them off for the sake of profit through their bride price.

Everybody accuse me of making money all the time. What else is there for me to do? I will spend the money I have in giving my girls a good start in life. They shall stop going to the market with me. I shall see that they get enrolled in a good school. I think that will benefit them in the future ... Naife is not going to send them away to any husband before they are ready. I will see to that!

(“The joys of motherhood”, 1988:168)

Ogot in her short story, entitled “The Rain Came”, shows the importance of giving birth to a girl. The chief is forced by his people to marry other wives until he marries a wife who can give birth to a girl. When we look at the story the value of giving birth to a girl is not the same as that of a boy. It is known that the boy will continue the family line but the girl won't. In this case the author shows that the importance of a girl in the family is to use her or to sacrifice her in order for matters to go right. In this story the author shows her readers that the life of a girl is not valuable, it is the same as that of a fly, because Oganda is being allowed to die as if her life was not valuable enough for the society.

It is also revealed through the story that women are a symbol of life, that is, they are the life givers. This is proved by the villagers who are happy to see Oganda's life being sacrificed for them in order to bring rain so that they can survive.

5.6 WOMEN AND WORK

Swaartbooi and Bâ as women writers are committed to giving a clear explanation of who they are and of their responsibilities as women from a woman's point of view. They are committed to correct the false image of the women in Africa, that they are bound to do housework, not men. They question the African stereotype that house work is for women or that to say woman is to say broom or kitchen. They also destroy the early sex socialisation of children according to their gender, by portraying male characters who are willing to do housework. It is emphasised by Robinson quoted by Rohrbaugh (1981), that housework is traditionally seen as for women only. But the author in her story proves that this is not always the case.

... Wawungeze utsho, uwubona ngaphandle utyatyekwe kakuhle, nangaphakathi uvetwe kakuhle ngobunono, ukuba akukho mantombazana, nangelo xesha wayengekabi nomolokazana uMamCirha wawugcinwe kwangolu hlobo lo mzi.

Oonyana bakhe babeqala ngowasebuhlanti umsebenzi, kanti nowendlu babewazi okwenene, begqitha into eninzi yamantombazana. Nasemasimini babesebenza into eneenkozo.

(“UMandisa”, 1975:8)

... You'll never say when you see it (the house) outside and inside being well smeared that there are no girls; even by the time MamCirha has no daughter-in-law the house was well kept. His sons start with men's work but they were well acquainted with house work as well, more than many girls. They also work in the field.

Division of labour according to gender depends on how the children are socialised by their parents from an early age. Modern feminists maintain that women should be enabled to do men's work and that men should do women's work. In the above quotation men develop their caring, nurturing qualities through participation in productive life. *Swaartbooi* shows the prerequisite of gender equality, an important goal in itself.

Bâ in her novel, "So long a letter", shows through Daba's husband that division of labour at home is unnecessary.

Daba does not find household work a burden. Her husband cooks rice as well as she does. her husband who claims. when I tell him he "spoils" his wife. "Daba is my wife. She is not my slave, nor my servant" ...

("So long a letter". 1989:73)

Mandisa at an early age is keen to help her mother in her daily house work before she goes to school. As a little girl she shows traces of commitment to house work or family work.

Tyhini, mama? ubuvuke nini na wena? "Ndivuke kusemnyama". "Kutheni na ukuze mna ungandivusi ngelaa xesha uvuke ngalo? ... Ungqushile uMandisa akugqiba ukuphunga. emana ekhwezela nomlilo ukuba ungacimi.

("UMandisa". 1975:17)

Whow, mother? when did you actually wake up? "I woken up when it was still dark. Why didn't you wake me up by the time you woke up? ... Mandisa stamped the mielies after she had finished drinking her coffee, and she was also looking after the fire so that it could die.

Mandisa accepts her womanhood from early in her life, when she learnt that gender and anatomy are unchangeable, that once a girl, always a girl. The reason why she is willing to help her mother is that she starts to value the womanness in herself and because she knows that to be a woman is wonderful. Weedon (1987) elaborates that, for Freud, Mandisa's acquisition of feminine subjectivity is located in the origin of her psychic structures of sexual identity that are acquired in the early years of childhood. Horney in Mitchell (1974) posits that to identify herself (Mandisa) as being a female does not influence her future behaviour. Mandisa's parents teach her skills of independence and self reliance so that she can be able to protect herself in future.

Swaartbooi is committed as a woman to tell other women that it is wise to help their daughters to be responsible so that they can be able to stand up for themselves in the near future without being burdens to other people. The author also points out that it is important for a woman to know how to do housework and any type of work, and at the same time to be educated. But one must not be forced to perform any duty, as is indicated in this novel. Mandisa's mother, MamNzotho, never forced Mandisa to wake up in the morning and do work. But Mandisa woke up at her own time and did what she could do to help.

The author sees education and domestic work as inseparable. Mandisa portrays a positive personality in the community because of the way she is bred by her parents. She is known by everybody because of her good work. She is one of the heroines who because of education, uplift the standard of African society by being a good teacher.

Bâ also shows the fact that a working woman is also responsible for domestic work.

Try explaining to them that a working woman is no less responsible for her home ... cleaning up, cooking, ironing. There are the children to be washed, the husband to be looked after. The working woman has a dual task, of which both halves, equally arduous, must be reconciled ...

(“So long a letter”. 1989:20)

Gilman's essay, edited by Jones and Olson (1991), posits that it is not motherhood that keeps women (Nokhaya and Nofinishi) on their feet from dawn till dark: it is house service, not child services.

Nokhaya: (Equbula inkonkxa esiya kukha amanzi) Makhe nditsibe emlanjeni bafazi adiniwe la manunga akule nkumba. Uza kufika efuna ishi ephungwayo uBawo abe ke akawafuni amanunga amadala.

Nofinishi: Khon 'ungatshongo mfazi masikhawuleziseni bethu athi ebuya zibe sezilungile zonke iinteleko.

(“Iinkunzi ezimbini”. 1994:6)

Nokhaya: (Taking a pail to fetch water) let me go to the river. women, the water in this pail is old. Father will come and ask for something to drink and he does not like old water.

Nofinishi: Repeat it not, woman. Let us hurry people so that when he comes back the pots will be ready.

Women's commitment to their families well being is also shown in NnuEgo's witness in the court of law where she agrees that she is the one who provides for the family but because of her submissiveness she bestows her hard work for the family on her husband, because according to traditional custom she is not supposed to be the breadwinner.

"Nnaife is the head of our family, He owns me, just like God in the sky owns us. So even though I pay the fees, yet he owns me. So in other words he pays. "Oh, I see and you clothe and sometimes feed the family, too?" NnuEgo nodded ... It came clear that she was doing

nearly all the providing and that when Nnaife was away in the army for four years, she had only received two allowances, even though she then had five children to look after.

(“The joys of motherhood”. 1988:217)

Nolasti in “Iinkunzi ezimbini” is portrayed as an enlightened woman. She does not deny her efforts in helping her family because of the fear of her husband. She is proud of her contribution to her family.

Nwapa in her novel entitled “Efuru” , displays a woman called Efuru who likes her independence as a woman and who does not allow herself to be oppressed by customary law. Efuru is a woman who is committed to work for her family instead of sitting down for months doing nothing because of the custom.

Efuru feasted for one month. Her mother-in-law wanted her to continue feasting for two months, but she refused saying that the life was a dull one. She wanted to be up and doing ... we have not got much money, and I want to start trading.

(“Efuru”, 1979:17)

Efuru came out of her feast before it was supposed to end. The writer is conveying to women that they must fight for their independence. Efuru fights the oppressive custom and her mother-in-law because she wished to see herself trading for the family well being and she succeeded because she was out of the feast after a month and she never went back. She fights against the stereotypes that are associated with women.

Women are committed to their families domestic work and to economic trade as well, for the sake of their families well-being. To be a mother, a wife and to work at the same time is not an easy job. But women like NnuEgo and Adaku show commitment to their responsibilities as market traders. These women have the feeling that their families come first. Women like

NnuEgo and Adaku are economic factors in society. They work hard labouring lifelong in the service, not of their children only, but also of men, husbands, brothers, fathers, whatever male relatives they have. NnuEgo works longer and harder than Nnaife, her husband. She is the wage earner for the family as well as the bearer and rearer of it during the time her husband was not working. Nnaife is worried about him being unemployed and about the risks that his wife faces for illegal trading.

Nnaife was wide awake now, staring at the ceiling of their one room home. This aspect of his wife's trade was illegal and could land her in trouble if she were caught. But what was he to do? ask her to stay? what about food for them?

(“The joys of motherhood”, 1988:89)

NnuEgo also sells firewood (a very stressful and strength requiring job) to keep the family income going.

... She took up selling firewood. This did not require much capital, simply a great of energy. One had to carry the wood from the water side, break it into pieces together into bundles for sale. Many other women found it too tiring.

(“The joys of motherhood”, 1988:161)

Nolasti in “Iinkunzi ezimbini” by Mothlabane is also a wage earner in her polygamous family.

Nolasti ... ukuba ibingeyiyo le mali ndiza nayo kwaba belungu ngesekudala abantwana bethu bengasahlawuli esikolweni. Ngesingasakwazi nokumondla umama wakho, andisathethi ke ngemali yoogqirha bakhe. Kutheni le nto usuka undenze umoni ngokuza nemali yokukuncedisa ekwenzeni ukuba intlalo yekhaya ibe lula?

(“Iinkunzi Ezimbini”, 1994:18)

Nolasti: ... If it was not for this money I earn from these whites the children would have stopped long ago paying in school. We would not be able to support your mother, not to mention her doctor's money. Why do you have to make me a sinner for bringing money to help you so that house life can be easy?

In these cases NnuEgo and Nolasti can be called the heads of their homes because of their success in providing income for their families. After all their efforts, they are not rewarded for them, instead they are looked down because of that "small space" that they possess (vagina).

Nolasti: ... kukuthini ukuthi umntu umncedisa olu hlobo asuke yena abe loluya utshaba? ... Ndizuza ntoni ke ngaloo mizamo ngaphandle kwentiyo kaSigqibo nabafazi bakhe.

(‘Iinkunzi ezimbini’, 1994:19)

Nolasti: ... What can you call this when you try to help someone and he turns to be that enemy? ... What am I getting for those efforts besides Sigqibo's and his wives' hatred.

Women are being portrayed as people who are hard workers in everything that they do. What ever they are doing they do it for the well being of their families at-large. It is proved that women they can also be part of the economic world instead of being put down by unnecessary women stereotypes.

5.7 STEREOTYPES OF WOMEN

Dazela in her novel entitled “Izono zakho ziya kukujikela” tries to take away the ever present stereotype of women as being gossipers. In most literature by men, women are engaged in gossiping that leads to violence. This is evident in Mtingane's drama “Inene nasi isibhozo”. where MaSukude and MaZulu are engaged in a fight because of NoAyini's gossip. Dazela portrays Nowam as the one who hinders Mpumlo, Sagwityi and Nkwenkwezi from gossiping about Sosiba.

Wonke umntu ohlala kule Phuta - Ditjhaba ukruqukile
lulwimi lwenu nobathathu.

(“Izono zakho ziya kukujikela”, 1984:51)

Everyone who stays in this Phuta - Ditjhaba is fed up about
your gossiping the three of you.

Mpumlo, Sagwityi and Nkwenkwezi display a paranoid disorder. They are jealous of Sosiba's progress in life and they decide on dangerous and destructive plots against him. Dana in her novel “Kufundwa ngamava” emphasises on the delusion of jealousy in men. In this case Cithumzi is involved in a plot of breaking his brother Zweni with the woman he loves. In much literature by men, actions like these are attributed to women as if they are the only ones in the world who could perform such acts.

Mvungi in her story entitled “Mwipenza the killer” portrays Makao as a woman who has the courage to risk her life for the life of her own mother. She puts the risk she takes at the back of her mind and pretends as if everything is normal in the village, whereas she knows that there is a serial killer who targets only people who travel alone.

In this story the author shows the power that women can have. She also portrays them as people who have less fear. The serial killer, Mwipenza, is being overcome by a woman. It is believed that a woman is a symbol for powerlessness but the author here is according them

the status of powerful people as the women managed to kill a person who is a threat to the whole village; even men would not travel on their own because they feared this man. The power of this woman gave a breakthrough to the whole village, from the misery of not having freedom of movement in their own land, by killing Mwipenza.

Amrouche in her story, "The story of the chest", shows the cunning of a woman. This girl saved the village by solving the king's son's riddle so that the people of the village could continue with their market; she saved her fellow villagers a fortune because people could not sell or buy in the market.

Father, for two market days you left
home, but you returned empty handed.
Why? My daughter, he replied, the king's
son came and told us not to buy or sell,
and not to sell or buy until we would know
the meaning of what he was going to say.

("Unwinding Threads": "The story of the chest",
1994:190)

The queen's wisdom surpasses the king's wisdom to show that the queen's mind is more advanced than that of the king. The queen came up with a solution to the problem of two women who both claim to be the mothers of a child.

Let the king simply say to the two women,
I shall divide the child in two, and each of
you may have half. "Then he will hear the
true mother cry out, Lord, don't kill him, in
God's name.

("Unwinding Threads": "The story of the
chest",1994:193)

After the problem has been solved as the queen has indicated, the king reminds the queen of their agreement when they married that if the queen's wisdom surpasses that of the king, on that day they will part. This shows how man do not want to be overcome by women. They often think that they are the only ones who will be able to solve delicate problems at home and in the family.

In the above stories the authors bury the stereotype that always places women far from solving delicate problems concerning the survival of society. They show that it will be a mistake for men to bypass women's views when they want to solve problems of any nature. These stories also give women the same status that is always attributed to men, that of being problem solvers.

Emecheta in "The joys of motherhood" disapproves of the weakness and softheartedness that is often revealed about women by male writers. She shows the animus archetype in them. Ona, Agbadi's mistress, reveals the extroverted part of her personality. She is willing to unite her identity with the men she cares for. She seeks a relationship of intimacy, partnership and affiliation. Ona develops the necessary strength to fulfill her commitment to Agbadi despite the sacrifices she has to make, that of staying in the house of a married man as his mistress, leaving her father behind without knowing. Agbadi utters these words to show his approval of Ona's strength.

My wives are too much in love with me to stand by and see me in pain. I need a heartless woman like you ... a woman whose heart is made of stone to stay and watch men remove my splints and not drown me with tears. I will die if you live.

('The joys of motherhood", 1988:16)

Agbadi's wives, because of their weakness and their lesser ability to endure pain, miss the opportunity to take care of their husband in his difficult time when they were supposed to be needed most. Ona shows a masculine personality because his father, Obi Ummuna, refuses to see her married to a man. He wanted her to produce children in his name and ensure the

continuity of his line because he did not have sons. He converts Ona into a boy and she develops masculine traits of character.

Within the Lacanian model, Ona is not born a subject who acquires appropriate social characteristics. Rather, she becomes a subject through her father's intervention in her life by making her choose a masculine identity.

Ona on her death warns her lover, Agbadi, that he must give their daughter her freedom to be a woman. Emecheta wants to make people aware of the importance of womanhood and the pain of being deprived of it, that one may die not knowing one's identity as a person, like Ona.

... Please don't mourn me for long, and see that however much you love our daughter NnuEgo you allow her to have a life of her own, a husband if she wants one. Allow her to be a woman.

(‘The joys of motherhood’, 1988:28)

5.8 CHILDLESSNESS AND THE JOYS OF MOTHERHOOD

The negative way that men and in-law treat women who are childless or who cannot give birth to sons should stop, because it has a psychological impact on the owner. NnuEgo in Emecheta's ‘The joys of motherhood’ finds herself breastfeeding a child which is not hers. At this stage she identifies herself with the child as if the child is hers. She is fulfilling her wish to have a child by letting her co-wife's child suck her breast. NnuEgo feels a sense of inferiority, a sense of loss of the self control to master the tasks which are set for her by her parents and the community at large. But this wish fulfilment she wants to make into a reality principle although it is not, because the child does not belong to her.

She looked at the crying child again. Why not breastfeed him herself? The mother wouldn't mind, she wouldn't even know. NnuEgo locked her hut, lay beside the child and gave him her virgin breasts ... The baby's restlessness abated and he sucked hungrily, though there was no milk ...

(“The joys of motherhood”, 1988:34)

When NnuEgo lost her first son she nearly killed herself because she knew that according to her culture she has wronged her husband.

The men make it look as if we must aspire for children or die. That is why when I lost my first son I wanted to die, because I failed to live up to the standard expected of me by the males in my life, my father and my husband and now I have to include my sons. But who made the law that we should not hope in our daughters? We women subscribe to that law more than anyone until we change all this, it is still a men's world which women will always help to build.

(“The joys of motherhood”, 1988:187)

NnuEgo shows her joy about pregnancy although her pregnancy is not valued by her husband, Nnaife. Emecheta here shows us that the joy of being a mother is the joy of a woman or a mother alone. Men take pregnancy as something that is natural and something that is bound to happen, like it or not. To them to impregnate a woman it is like any other job that they can perform with success. Men psychologically repress the joys of being a father because they are looking after their status as men.

"You are not even happy to see me pregnant the greatest joy of my life!" "Of course I am happy to know that I am a man but any man can do that. What do you want me to do? How many babies are born in this town every day?"

(“The joys of motherhood”, 1988:51)

It is hurting to a woman not to be able to bear children for her husband it is more painful to the one who is married into a polygamous family. It is not only men who oppress women who are not having children but also other women do so to their women counterparts. The joys of being a mother is something that makes women to know that they are true women because of the stigma associated to barrenness.

5.9 SUBMISSIVENESS-POWERLESSNESS

Traditional women totally believe in a man as the head of the house, which means that they have accepted their submissiveness and they view it as something that is natural. But at the same time those women who are literate are independent of their husbands, they can stand up for themselves instead of being submissive. This is seen in the following dialogue between Sigqibo's wives.

Nokhaya: Hayi wethu akukho xesha lakuphumla ayeza la mancentsa, kuza kuba njani xa esifikela sithe dudlu apha sonke? Phumla wena ukuba uyafuna usiyeke thina sisebenze ...

Nofinishi: Awukwazi nokuhlonipha kodwa uthi ungumfazi! Ityhontsi yintloko, yile nto ke ayiyo uyise kaMandla apha kuthi, uyasondla, uyasinxiba. usikhusele, u ...

Nolasti: ... Ngelishwa ke apha kum alizi nanto intsha kuba ndiyakwazi ukuzenzela zonke ezi zinto zenziwa yityha - uthi yintoni na kanene? ... Mna ndiyazisebenzela abe Lungu bam endibanasela abantwana bandinika imali eyigqitha le - e- e le mfeketho asabela yona uSigqibo

(“Iinkunzi ezimbini”, 1994:7)

Nokhaya: No, there is no time to relax, these men are coming, how will it be when they arrive seeing us sitting down here? You can rest if you want and let us do work ...

Nofinishi: You cannot even respect but you are saying you are a married woman! A man is a head, that is what Mandla 's father is to us. He feeds us, he clothes us, he protects us, he ...

Nolasti: Unfortunately to me it does not come with something new because I can do all of the things that are done by him ... I work for myself, the whites for whom I babysit their children give me money which is far more than this cent Siggibo gives us.

The author in the above quotations is trying to show us that the term "head of the house" is not easy to erase because there are those women who are traditionalist. They won't listen to anyone who is trying to argue for equality between women and men; instead they will curse that person for that attempt. For instance Nolasti, according to the neo-Freudians, is viewed by her co-wives who believe in traditionalism as neurotic, because she rejects her passive, powerless feminine role.

5.10 MEN AND THEIR FEAR

Men have the fear of a castration complex (male fear of the loss of the penis), that is loss of social power; this is seen in the dialogue between Gcisa and Sibonda.

Sibonda: Wenzani na Rhadebe mfondini? Kaloku imfundiso encancwe nguNolasti lo kwezi zizwe zasemzini kukumelana axhomane nendoda akuva ethanda. Akukho nto unokuyigqiba ngosapho lwakho angaceli mngeni. Yinto leyo eyenza

ukuba sisoloko sijamelana okwemiqhagi kulo mzi kuba into-
kazi le ithetha isondele kanye ebusweni bendoda.

Gcisa: ... Andazi ke ukuba ilungelo lomfazi liyeke nini na
ukuba kukwamkela, ukukhuselewa, ukondliwa nokonwat-
yiswa yindoda emzekileyo. Aba Nokhontoni bale mihla
bathi ilungelo lomfazi kukulawula indoda. Bendingazi
ukuba uNolasti ukuloo nto naye.

(“Iinkunzi ezimbini”, 1994:11)

Sibonda: What are you doing Rhadebe? Nolasti's educa-
tion that she obtained from the western culture is to chal-
lenge man when she feels like it. There is nothing that you can
decide for your family without Nolasti's obstruction. This
makes us to always look at each other as hens in this house
because this lady talks very close to your face.

Gcisa: ... I don't know when the rights of women stop being to
receive, to be protected, to be fed and to accept hap-
piness from the man who married her. These women of
today say women 's rights are to rule a man. I did not
know that Nolasti is also involved in that.

In the above quotation the author shows the negative attitude that males have against women's education and women's literacy. They have a misunderstanding of women who long for understanding or who long for their voice to be considered by their husbands, as if the woman wants to take over his role although she just wants to be considered in the family decisions.

This castration complex that men develop contributes to destroying many relationships or marriages. The only solution is that it will be better if men could view women as people who want to work hand in hand with them, not as people who want to overthrow them.

Mothlabane echoes the fact that was discovered by Horney, that men, especially traditional men like Sibonda and Gcisa fail to live according to their real self because they blame women when things go the wrong way in their houses and they are also critical in a way that undermines the confidence of women.

5.11 CONCLUSION

Women in the above discussion display their commitment as women writers. They correct the false information given by male writers. They seek to destroy all patriarchal structures by creating characters who believe in western viewpoints that oppose submissiveness and powerlessness of women. They portray women as a whole person, not as a dependant of man. Women writers question the traditional point of view that femininity is defined as the lack of a phallus, as Freud has indicated. They also prove that woman's sexuality and identity are not capable of characterization only with reference to the phallic signifier but that they are characterized with reference to their womanhood.

CHAPTER 6

BEYOND GENDER INEQUALITY

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Male domination is very popular in African society. Women are regarded as “honorary children”. The female is not regarded as a “whole” being, she is viewed as unfinished, physically mutilated and emotionally dependent. On the other hand men are designed to be dominant.

Women everywhere had come to see that peace is impossible without the development of economic justice and an end to the everyday threat of gender - based inequality and violence against women worldwide.

Bunch and Carrillo (in Tinker, 1990:72)

This chapter will examine how gender inequality affects the people involved. We will also explore the way in which these inequalities are being implemented. The voices of different women and men are going to be heard in order to establish how people in the society we live in are affected (if they are affected) by this gender inequality. These voices are going to help us to see what females and males think about this gender inequality issue. This chapter consists of the following sub-topics: seeds of inequality, compulsory emotions, socialization for inequality, social norms, marriage and sexual division of labour. Before we go any further, let us hear what others say about the term gender.

Gender is defined by Scott (in Zinsser, 1993:54) as:

A constitutive element of social relationships
based on perceived differences between the sexes,
the knowledge that establishes meanings
for bodily difference ...

Gender inequality is linked with the relationship of power between the sexes. McKinnon in Kramarae and Treichler (1985: 174) further emphasises on the above statement by saying:

Gender is a division of women and men caused
by the social requirements of heterosexuality,
which institutionalizes male sexual dominance
and female sexual submission.

When we look at the above definition we notice that sexuality is one of the results, or the cause, of gender inequality. What about gender stereotypes? The gender stereotype also has a role in inequality. Some people in society socialise themselves according to these stereotypes with the awareness that it is their way of living, unaware that they are creating a boundary between themselves (male and female). Gender stereotypes are defined by Golombok & Fivus (1994) as organised sets of beliefs about the characteristics of all members of a particular group. These set of beliefs are about what it means to be female or male. Gender stereotypes include information about physical appearance, attitude and interest, psychological traits, social relations and occupation. Most important, these various dimensions are interrelated; simply knowing that an individual is female implies that this person will have certain physical characteristics (soft voice, dainty, graceful actions and certain psychological traits (nurturant, dependent, weak, emotional) and will engage in particular kinds of activities (child care, cooking, gardening). These stereotypes can result in gender inequality especially if people do differentiate their roles according to gender.

According to Papanek in Tinker (1990) inequality is both learned and taught. She also maintains that in many cases, inequality is also cloaked in the veil of rational self interests, as in women's preferences for sons in those societies where few women can survive alone but must depend on the support of men. Let us therefore consider seeds of inequality.

6.2 SEEDS OF INEQUALITY

It is important to open this sub-topic and other sub-topics that follow with some voices from the respondents in the field. Some respondents agree with some issues and some don't. The respondents that I talked with were between 20 and 50 years of age. Some were married women and men and some were unmarried. Their viewpoints are their own opinions.

Before we go further with this sub-topic it is important to explain that the answers from the respondents for this sub-topic overlap a great deal with the sub-topics that follow; this is why we are not going to list the responses here. The answers to this sub-topic also cover the fact that women believe that they cannot do anything without the help of men and that men want to maintain their status as the heads of households. Some women take themselves as powerless and they admit to their inequality and their subordination.

Seeds of inequality, according to Papanek in Tinker (1990:180), are:

Planted deep in the conscious of women and men, often by other women, who perceive their self interest to lie in the hands of men rather than other women. But since inequality depends on social learning in the first place, it can also be unlearned.

In the case of the above quotation we have discovered that women, like men, learn to accept their life circumstances by means of the norms and expectations of the group to which they belong. This is proved in Mothlabane's drama, "Iinkunzi Ezimbini", by the conversation between Sibonda and Gcisa:

Sibonda: Zakhe zakhonya na iinkunzi ezimbini
 ebuhlantini obunye Gcisa? Yinto esiza
 kuyithini le ivelele usapho lukaPhalo?
 Uthi uyindoda njani xa uphendulana nabafazi
 emzini wakho? ...

(“Iinkunzi ezimbini”. 1994: 11)

Sibonda: Have ever two bulls bellowed in the same
 kraal? What are we going to do with
 this thing that overshadowed Phalo's homestead?
 In what way can you describe yourself as
 a man when you exchange words with women
 in your own house? ...

Sibonda's words show that inequality is always on his mind. He does not expect to exchange words with his wife in his house as he puts it. He also feels threatened when a woman exchanges words with him because he thinks that this will lower his authority and status as a man. From Sibonda's statement we can say that he has accepted his tradition and what his society expects of him (as a man) and what it expects from women. Sibonda lives by the superego, the trait of which Freud believes that it internalizes the influences of the parents. It represents the morals and standards of society that have become part of the development of the personality. It is the superego that raises Sibonda's and other men of the village's consciousness from the values and norms of what society expects of them. According to them society expects them to be able to take care of their wives. They are not supposed to allow their wives to exchange words with them because that shows lack of respect from their wives. In the case of women we are going to hear Nofinishi's words which prove that even women

are clinging to this inequality, because they are also being controlled by their superego.

Nofinishi: Usimele ngempucuko yokuba yena
 akanakuphathwa yincentisa. Ndixakwa kukuba
 wayeze kuthini apha kanti ufuna ukuziphatha ...
 Bayafuna ukuba ngabafazi kodwa abakwazi
 tu ukwenda. Lo Nolasti ungafika engqayiza.
 ezibiza ukuba yena uyinkosikazi kaJwarha uqobo
 ezingomba isifuba kuba etshate ezi-ofisini
 zeemantyi, inqaba kukuziphatha okwenkosikazi.

(“Iinkunzi Ezimbini”. 1994: 14)

Nofinishi: She has been telling us about her enlightenment
 that she cannot be ruled by a man. What amazes
 me is: what was the reason of her coming here
 if she wants to rule herself...
 They want to be wives but they do not know what
 it means to be a wife. This Nolasti you can see her
 boasting, calling herself Jwarha’s wife, also
 boasting about marrying at the magistrates court.
 but the problem is. she cannot behave as a wife.

From the above words we can see that Nofinishi is one of the women who believes that her self interest lies in the hands of her husband Sigqibo, not with other women. She believes that to be married is to do what your husband wants you to do because you are under his control. She also believes that if you are a woman and you maintain that you are married you must behave the way a married woman is supposed (according to her and her society’s expectations) to behave, to be loyal and be submissive to her husband’s needs.

These two quotations from Sibonda and Nofinishi demonstrate that both men and women have intensified the idea of inequality. They see it as a normal thing to do.

In “The Slave Girl” by Emecheta the acceptance of inequality by both females and males is being portrayed. Ma Palagada, who is a well known trader, is getting the slaves from outside by paying for them so that they can help her with her trade and at home. But because a woman only possesses a small space, which makes her powerless, Ma Palagada does not own the slaves that she pays for, but Pa Palagada does, because he is a man. Pa Palagada is not involved in trading: he stays at home abusing other female slaves and waits for his wife to come back. The credit is not attributed to the one who works hard for it but to the person who did not do anything.

It was a known fact that although
Ma Palagada was the one who had bought
them, they ultimately belonged to Pa Palagada
and whatever he said or ordered would hold.

(“The Slave Girl”, 1995: 113)

This also further emphasises the fact that inequality is always part of the consciousness of men and women. Ma Palagada perceives no alternatives except to live by these norms of accepting that she is overpowered, although she is the one who has power in her hands: she does not see any other way to assure a good life for her slaves than by continuing to enforce inequality, as she does not have the powers to stop her husband from abusing the female slaves. The enforcement of this inequality is based on the gender stereotypes that one is being socialised with. According to her, she does not have a right to reprimand her husband because she is a woman, and societal norms and values do not allow a woman to show a man his bad side.

6.3 COMPULSORY EMOTIONS

Compulsory emotions are also a sign of gender inequality. We have already mentioned them when we introduced this chapter, where we refer to them as gender stereotypes. It is said that these emotions are actually important in socializing women and men to accept inequality. Stereotypes do not necessarily reflect reality; rather, they represent culturally shared beliefs

about what particular individuals will be like. Whether or not it is true that females are soft, dainty, nurturant creatures, we know that this is the cultural version of what it means to be feminine. Stereotypes would suggest many differences between males and females, but often they have no basis in real behaviour. Golombok and Fivush (1994) state that we must keep in mind that what we believe about gender differences may or may not be true. They further maintain that culturally prescribed stereotypes do express those characteristics that are considered socially desirable for women and men to possess. Let us first hear the voices of the respondents:

- Those stereotypes you are talking about are our duties as women.
- They are not wrong, they are women's job not men's.
- That is true, a woman must always show kindness and warmth all the time, it is our duty to do that especially to our men.
- It is what we have been taught to believe and we can't deviate from that. When you were taught something it is difficult to see it in another way.
- The change you are telling me about is it for the better? I can tell you now because so many things have happened and are still happening because of it.
- As far as I am concerned women and men cannot behave the same and they cannot perform the same duties. So, you think I can go to the kraal and slaughter a goat? Do you think you can see a man making fire (ekhwezela)? That does not happen.
- I will never do a woman's job in my life.
- It is like that my girl, a man has got strength to protect the family, he must not be seen laughing all the time by women, it is not good for his dignity.

- We have higher status than women because of the type of work we are doing, like feeding them, protecting them, making them pregnant. What else do you want? If you want to be us you won't succeed.
- I can say these stereotypes are the way forward for women and men to accept inequality because they see them as something that they are forced to perform.
- The stereotypes like those first questions you first asked me, not easy to see or identify. You perform or do or behave in whichever way with the knowledge that it is supposed to be like that. For an example, when I come from work I know I have to cook for me, my husband and the kids. I never associated it with the compulsory job associated with women. I do it because I want to.
- Yes, women are expected to behave in a certain way as compared to men. this does not bother me at all, I don't see it as a sign of inequality, I see it as a sign of building each other to form "ubuntu" among people.
- I don't see the point to differentiate between men's work or job and women's job. For instance I can perform any type of job anytime without thinking that this is men's or women's, as long as I have the strength to do it, is also mine.
- My message is, these stereotypes are causing problems because we tend not to do things because we think they belong somewhere else.

There are mixed feelings about these gender stereotypes among the respondents. Some people believe that men have to perform only men's jobs and others feel the other way round, that any job is for anybody, whether male or female. Some women in this new and stressful environment, come to rely heavily on the compulsory emotions put in them from childhood to conform to social norms and control their feelings of hostility. This is evident in Emecheta's "The Slave Girl" when Pa Palagada voices what we believe are the stereotypes attributed to women.

He was one of those big, manly males who would not hesitate to tell you that women were created as play things for men, that they were brainless, mindless and easily pliable. And yet it was to a woman that he would go to pour out his troubles wanting her to listen, to sympathize and make appropriate noises, to give him a cuddle, tell him how handsome and kind he was, and how everything was going to be all right and that he should not worry. Yet he never respected any woman.

(“The Slave Girl”, 1995: 98)

Pa Palagada has used gender stereotypes in interpreting the behaviour of women. A male holds more stereotyped views about gender. He does not give praise to women although they play a positive part that he himself has discovered, that they can be good consolers of one's soul. Gender stereotypes are only one dimension of our understanding of others. In Pa Palagada's words we notice the female stereotype of women as a man's pillar of strength.

Ojebeta in the same novel by Emecheta takes what is happening in her life as the way things should be.

In her own way Ojebeta was content and did not want more of life, she was happy in her husband, happy to be submissive, even to accept an occasional beating, because that was what she had been brought up to believe a wife should expect.

(“The Slave Girl”, 1995: 178)

The reason for Ojebeta to accept this situation is that she was socialised in such a way that as

a woman she had to accept what is being done to her by men. Ojebeta's acceptance of abuse from her husband represents how tradition can sometimes be so unfair to women. Ojebeta's acceptance of her life with her husband re-affirms the demands and expectations of traditional culture and of patriarchy, that women should be submissive to their husbands actions towards them. Submissiveness is part of repression. Reber (1985: 640) in sociology and social psychology refers to repression as the limitations on a group's or an individual's freedom of expression and action by a dominant group or individual. Ojebeta is compelled to repress her feelings and live according to her superego, so that she will not be an outcast to her society. She wants to be taken as an obedient woman. On the other hand her husband is allowed to vent his feelings by beating his wife up. In "Iinkunzi Ezimbini" by Mothlabane she also portrays these compulsory emotions by giving us an example of a woman who believes that a man is the head of the house because he supports, clothes and protects women.

Nofinishi: Awukwazi nokuhlonipha kodwa uthi
ungumfazi! Ityhontsi yintloko, yile nto
ke ayiyo uyise kaMandla apha kuthi. Uyasondla
uyasinxiba, usikhusele, u...

("Iinkunzi Ezimbini", 1994: 7)

Nofinishi: You cannot even show respect but you are saying
you are a woman! A man is the head, that is what
Mandla's father is to us. He feeds us, clothes us,
protects us, he ...

Nofinishi is one of the women who totally accepts a man as the head of the house. Nofinishi's speech also emphasises that a man and his word should be law in his homestead. She also wants Nolasti to support and be submissive to her husband. She accepts that she is a man's follower. Nofinishi as a traditional wife does not believe in challenging the authority of her husband. Sibonda in the same drama also puts an emphasis on these gender stereotypes.

Sibonda: Uvume njani Nolasti? Uyivuma njani into elolo hlobo ungakhange ugqithe kum? Uthetha ukuba uza kusuka uzigqibele ukuba unokubuya nanini na xa uthanda, apha emzini wam?

(“Iinkunzi Ezimbini”, 1994: 17-18)

Sibonda: How did you accept it Nolasti? How can you accept something like that without consulting me? Do you think you are going to take your own decision that you want to come at any time here in my house?

Sibonda confirms the idea that the tasks that women and men carry out in life are viewed differently by different sexes. These tasks are planted in Sibonda’s mind, he expects his wife not to make any final decisions without his consent as a man. This means that even if Nolasti is interested in accepting the offer from her madam, if her husband does not approve she cannot go any further with it. These stereotypes are viewed as ingrained images in society’s mindset, they are difficult to change. This is why Sibonda shows his authority in his words by putting emphasis on saying “apha emzini wam”: here in my house. This shows that no woman is supposed to take any decisions in his homestead without him being involved as a man. This shows that men are decision makers and women are not, and women are not supposed to enter their husband’s houses as they prefer, at any time, because they are females. This demonstrates the inferior position that women hold in the society and in their houses. This also shows how culture commands women to succumb to the will of the men.

Nokhaya’s words also portray these gender stereotypes. She tells Nolasti, her co-wife, who is more enlightened than her, that there is no time to rest because their husband is on his way. This means that their lives are being remote controlled by their husband. They cannot have time to themselves to sit down and relax, even if they are tired. Their whole life is meant to make their husband Sigqibo satisfied. They believe that it is their duty and a woman’s task to look after the well being of her husband by making sure that he is happy. They do not want to be seen by their husband sitting down (relaxing), they must be seen working all the time

although their husband is going to come home and relax, because to be tired is a human matter not a man's matter only. Nokhaya is one of the women who enjoys being a wife and who enjoys working like a slave for her husband.

Nokhaya: Hayi wethu akukho xesha lakuphumla ayeza la mancentsa, kuza kuba njani xa esifikela sithe dudlu apha sonke? Phumla wena ukuba uyafuna usiyeke thina sisebenze.

(“Iinkunzi Ezimbini”. 1994: 7)

Nokhaya: No, there is no time to rest, these men are coming, how will it be when they arrive seeing us sitting here? You can rest if you want and leave us to work.

Nokhaya's speech clarifies that only a man has the sole right to rest when he is tired. As a woman Nokhaya and other women have no right to relax, they should be seen by their men as busy all the time. They give in to the authority and control of their husband even if the circumstances do not allow this. According to traditional culture a woman shows no form of respect if she sits down at her husband's homestead as if there is no work to be done. This shows that we live in a male dominated culture where women's needs and feelings are being unacknowledged and where women are forced into sex roles which deprive them of their happiness. On the other hand the quotation above also proves that it is African tradition which enforces inequality. Nokhaya is fighting for her recognition as a woman and for her rights. This means that educated or enlightened people see things in a different way.

6.4 SOCIALIZATION FOR INEQUALITY

Socialization for inequality focuses mostly on elderly women who want to recreate their childhood pain in their daughters and their daughters-in-law. Even men socialize their sons in a way that encourages gender inequality. Let us hear what the following voices have to say and demonstrate:

- If my son and my daughter - in - law did not have children I was going to put the blame on my daughter - in - law. It is a woman who is supposed to carry a child not a man.
- Yes of course it is the duty of a woman to see to it that she gets pregnant, not that of a man. A man is there to help you through.
- I am thinking the way I think because I was socialised like that. My mother had the same beliefs and my mother-in-law nearly blames me when she sees that it is one year after I join my new home without a child. She approached me and ask me why? And I tell her that I don't know, I am also still waiting.
- How can I think of my husband as the one who delayed a pregnancy at our home?
- No my child, it is not that we are perpetuating inequality. We are doing what a woman is supposed to do to her children, that is what our mothers and our mother-in-law do to us. It is a chain.
- A man and a woman will never be equal that's all.
- It is not that we are punishing our children or our daughters- in - law by expecting to get pregnant. It is their duty they must know that. If they don't, that man's house will die.

- It is because men have got their own custom to carry through to their sons and women have got theirs to carry through to their daughters. No woman can be involved in men's customs and no man can be involved in women's customs.

- Even if you think it is your husband who cannot have children, although such thought never crossed my mind, you must never ever voice it out because you will be a disgrace.

- We cannot rebel against our customs and our traditional belief, my child. We have to teach you and the generation to come what our mother and our mother-in-law taught us.

- It will be difficult for me to jump for these new things now. I don't know them because I was born before they were born. The word fight against I don't approve what I know is that a woman has to be loyal all the time.

- Yes, I am a learned person but I would love to see my son and my daughter-in-law having children.

- Oh! That is a very difficult question. In my opinion it is not in our conscious to think of a man as being in fault when it comes to having children because I myself I will not think of a man as having a problem, but me or any other woman.

- It is because women are associated with reproduction.

- I don't think when we are socializing our daughters and our daughters-in-law the way we were socialized we are perpetuating inequality, but we are reinforcing our customs.

- Yes, I can agree that sometimes the way we act and the way we do things we are condoning inequality. We are sometimes oppressing ourselves unconsciously by thinking what we are doing is right.

- The issue of powerlessness and subordination has been long inflicted on our minds in such a way that we always think what we reinforce to our daughters is the right thing to do.
- I grew up with my father telling me that as a man I must be strong even if the situation does not allow that.
- My father used to give me and my other brothers preference over girls.
- He used to tell and teach us what we should do when we grew up and get married.
- I can say I am partly affected by his influence, because I have that belief that my son cannot be socialized in the same way as girls or else he will be a dummy.

These ideas mentioned above prove that the idea of socialization for inequality happens unconsciously. In most cases the respondents are not aware that their actions are leading to or are enforcing inequality. They think it is the way things are.

Papanek in Tinker (1990) maintains that in many cases, inequality is also cloaked in the veil of rational self-interest. In the novel entitled "Isazela sidl' umniniso" by Magadla (1992) MamQoma, who is Tozi's mother-in-law, is one of the elderly women who, because of her remembered pain of being looked at by her in-laws for her child's birth, decides to inflict a similar pain on her daughter-in-law by looking at her stomach each and every time she sees her, to confirm whether she is pregnant or not. MamQoma still remembers how she felt when socialization for inequality began in her own childhood when the blame was always put only on women, when the couple could not have children. It was not associated with men at all. MamQoma is an example of a woman who does not want to break the cycle of inequality for the generation to come. She does not want to rebel against this stigma which is associated with women; instead she wants to see to it that Tozi her daughter-in-law does not have a happy marriage because she does not bear children.

Some people perpetuate inequality because they feel that they have to do it since people of their society are doing it, MamXesibe in “Bhut’ Lizo Ndixolele” by Mbekeni and Ntloko portray her hostility and hatred towards her daughter-in-law Nobantu. The reason for this is that her son died before they could have children. Because of this MamXesibe blames Nobantu for being barren.

MamXesibe: Kakade andiyiboni into osayihlaleleyo apha
 xa ufelwe yindoda. Ungahlala nendoda
 iinyanga ezingaka kanti iza kufa ingashiyanga
 nto eya kuba ngumfanekiso wayo. Ndiza
 kulenza ntoni mna idlolokazi?

(“Bhut’ Lizo Ndixolele”, 1979: 56 - 57)

MamXesibe: For that matter I do not see the reason why you are
 staying here when your husband is dead. How can you
 stay with a man so many months and he died without
 having a child which will remain his picture.
 What am I going to do with a barren woman?

MamXesibe, being a woman, is inflicting more pain on Nobantu who is already hurt because of her dead husband. Socialization for inequality can be one of the causes which can affect women’s lives. It also causes them not to have feelings for other women. It also encourages them to feel satisfaction when they make other women unhappy as was done in their childhood, and to them, by other women.

Another aspect of this sub-topic, socialization for inequality, is termed ‘social norms of inequality’. Those social norms of inequality are based on situations where the female body is produced (manipulated) to be suitable for marriage and the role of normative emotions associated with family life. As Papanek in Tinker (1990: 178) indicates:

In the case of extreme practices, such as foot-binding and genital mutilation the social norms of inequality require women to “produce” through physical alterations of the female body - a daughter who can make a good marriage.

NnuEgo in “The joys of motherhood” by Emecheta is an example of a woman who suffers physical alterations through genital mutilation. The pain that these women suffer from this is not easy to erase from their minds. They bury it deep in their unconscious and it only comes back when one has a female child. The mother and other elderly women will make sure that what they felt during their childhood they are going to pass on to their children. This proves that in one way or another women have accepted inferiority because these women grew up knowing that there is a difference between women and men. To be a woman you have to pass through painful customs in order to get married successfully but men don’t suffer for taking wives.

6.5 NAMES AS A SOURCE OF GENDER INEQUALITY

Names can convey various attributes which characterise male and female individuals in different ways. Names are believed to have power. Bosmajian states that:

The power that comes from names and naming is related directly to the power to define others - individuals, races, sexes, ethnic groups. Our identities, who and what we are, how others see us, are greatly affected by the names we are called and the words with which we are labelled.

(Bosmajian, 1974: 5 in Nuessel, 1992: 3)

There is a truth contained in Bosmajian's statement that people (both females and males) are identified by their names. This identification can be in the form of indicating sex by means of a name, and clearly a person's name, can identify her amongst others. What do the respondents have to say about their names and the names of others?

- A name's meaning is very important to its owner, so it is also wise that one's name must have a significant meaning.
- My child's name is Phumla - she is a girl.
- The name means rest.
- The time we were giving her the name we never thought of it being meaningless or meaningful nor did we consider the tone thing.
- My son's name is Thozama.
- If I were to turn it to a girl's name I will say Thozama (with a high tone)
- Now I can understand that Thozama (for females) does not have meaning.
- My son is Mandisa.
- A girl is Mandisa (with the high tone and different pronunciation).
- Now I can see what you are getting at but it is like that.
- It is because there must be a difference between a male and female - so that is why in the names which have the same spelling for both sexes you will find out that they differ in tone and the way they are being pronounced.

- It would be funny if a male for instance can be called Thozama with a woman's pronunciation.
- I can say names are there to differentiate us. (Males and females.)
- It is so unfortunate for the women that it happened that they fall in the category of meaningless names.
- My name is Thozama (girl) - whenever I happen to be asked its meaning I will always say it means "to be quiet, calm" but now I can see it does not have meaning in my language.
- That No - in women's names shows us that it is a woman that you are talking about.
- Men do not have any identifying feature in their names because they are different from us women.
- That prefix No- in some females names makes it easy for those who do not understand our languages so that they can know that now they are talking about a woman.

Some respondents were not aware that their names do not have meaning. In fact the way their names are pronounced puts them in a meaningless position.

Swartbooi in the novel "UMandisa" also names one of her main female characters by this meaningless name Mandisa. To her consciousness the name does have meaning because it is the way we were made to believe, up until the critics came along with their critical evaluation of human names. Swartbooi, like our respondents, took the name Mandisa (with the high tone for the girl, which is meaningless in the Xhosa language) as something which brings happiness although this explanation really fits the male version of Mandisa with a low tone of voice. Let us look at Swartbooi's analysis of this name.

“Umzukulwana wam ndifuna abe nguMandisa
igama lakhe, mntwana wam. Kaloku kumnandi
kakhulu kum, kuba ufumene intombi”, ...

(“UMandisa”, 1975: 4)

“I want my grandchild’s name to be Mandisa,
my child. It is a great happiness to me that you
have a girl child”, ...

This inequality in names also comes out in clan names where a female will be called MamNzothwa and the male Nzothwa, not “TaNzothwa”. This is also evident in Swartbooi’s “UMandisa”.

UMamNzothwa ke umxelele uNkululeko
konke okuphathelele kwigama
lomntwana wabo.

(“UMandisa”, 1975: 5)

MamNzothwa tells Nkululeko
everything concerning their
child’s name.

The prefix Ma- in the case of a female also specifies gender inequality in names and clan names. The prefix Ma- originates from mama. This also can be done with males by the use of the prefix Ta- which stands for Tata. Women are always so unfortunate that they are the ones for whom that the language has to include identifying features in their names, which categorises them according to their sex. Mbekeni and Ntloko in “Bhut’ Lizo Ndixolele” show the No- prefix in females’ names.

Nonzwakazi: Ifundeka ngolu hlobo Nomhle

(“Bhut’ Lizo Ndixolele”. 1979: 10)

Nonzwakazi: It reads as follows Nomhle

Some names that are given to males and to females do show gender inequality. The reason for saying this is because some women’s names do not have meaning whereas men’s names have satisfactory meanings. This means that gender inequality is not something that develops at the later stage of an individual life. Some people grow up with it, they possess it by means of their names although they are not aware of it.

6.6 MARRIAGE

According to Mbiti marriage is regarded as highly important in African culture. This is evident in his words (1969: 133):

For African peoples marriage is the focus of existence. It is the point where all the members of a given community meet: the departed, the living and those yet to be born ... Marriage is a drama in which everyone becomes an actor or actress and not just a spectator. Therefore, marriage is a duty, a requirement from the corporate society, and a rhythm of life in which everyone must participate. Otherwise, he who does not participate in it is a curse to the community, he is a rebel and a lawbreaker, he is not only abnormal but “under-human”.

The above comment highlights the importance and the necessity of getting married. According to Mbiti's statement society looks down on people who are unmarried or who do not want to participate in marriage. When we view marriage in terms of gender inequality we find that it is even better to live without a man than to suffer in marriage because of the sex that you possess. Even those who possess power because of their penis, which is their key to their social status, sometimes do not enjoy the fruit of marriage because in some cases they have to fight for their status and reinforce inequality so that they can be seen as head of the house.

Polygamy is another issue that can be mentioned under the concept of gender inequality in marriage. Men are allowed to have more than one wife and this means that men are going to be in control of all of them. On the other hand tradition does not allow women to have more than one husband because she is a woman. Ojebeta in "The slave girl" by Emecheta utters these words:

So men would simply take wives if they felt like it, while women, on the other hand, must have one husband, and only one.

("The slave girl", 1995: 178)

Ojebeta believes that a man, as the Bible says, is supposed to commit himself to one wife. This indicates that women's love is limited, it cannot be extended like that of men. Is it love to marry many wives or is it just a fulfilment of customs and to maintain the status quo of one's tradition?

Women who believe in the traditional way of life do not have any problem with being owned by one man, whether he has two or five women. That is why Ojebeta, after having many questions about what would happen if a wife cannot have children, decides to go back to her traditional thought that "only a stupid woman would expect her husband to remain married to her alone and what was she, if not only a woman?" ("The slave girl", 1995: 178). Gender inequality is shown where women like Ojebeta accept that women are supposed to understand their husband's decision to marry other women and they have to look at it in a positive light.

Love is not the reason for men to marry many wives, but rather to maintain their status and be seen as a man amongst other men, because this is going to help them to have many children in their homestead. The only thing that is happening among these people is tolerance, not love. Love is not important to traditional men as they claim that a man is not supposed to show love to a woman, but the woman must remember him as a hard and strict person.

In a polygamous marriage women have to tolerate each other even if the situation does not allow for that. They have to do it out of respect for their husband. This is disadvantageous to them because they do not have the chance of getting to know their husband as they wish, because he has to give each and every one of them a chance to be with him. Sometimes he does this in such a way that one feels that she is being abandoned. This may be the result of a quarrel between the two.

Mothlabane in “Iinkunzi Ezimbini” shows us how a man with different wives pays a visit to them and how it affects some of them. This is seen in Sigqibo’s words when he is talking to his other wife Nolasti, who wants to have a say in their home decisions.

Sigqibo: Le nto ingazange ibe yingxaki nje kubafazi
 ababekho ngaphambili kwakho kweli khaya
 yintoni? Uyaqaphela phofu ukuba uNokhaya
 noNofinishi bonwabile kuba bona bayayazi
 indawo yabo? Wena lo ukhalaza rhoqo usithi
 ndichitha ixesha elininzi ndincokola nabo ngaphezu

kwakho, into ongafuniyo ukuyiqonda kukuba xa
 ndikunye nabo andikho dabini lamagunya njengokuba
 kusiba njalo xa ndinawe. Nangoku nje ukuba
 ubundimamele kwakuqala ngale nto kaLuvuyo,
 ngesesincokola ezimnandi ngoku. Kodwa ke
 kuba wena wasoloko uyiphikisa into endiyithethayo,

siyawaxambula ke nangoku. Ingaba akuyiboni le mpazamo yakho?

(“Iinkunzi Ezimbini”, 1994: 29)

Sigqibo: This thing was never a problem to the wives before you in this house, why? Do you notice that Nokhaya and Nofinishi are happy because they know their place? You always complaining saying I spend more time talking with them than I do with you, something that you do not want to understand is that when I am with them I am not in the battle over rights as it is when I am with you. Even now if you had listened carefully about Luvuyo’s issue we should have been talking about happy things now. But because you always dispute everything I say, we are even quarrelling even now, are you not seeing your mistake?

Another disadvantage of polygamy is that men tend to make comparisons among their wives. so this puts some on a weak position. That is why these women will try by all means to satisfy their husband because they know that if they are lacking in one way or another they will not have any visit from him. It is not a happy feeling to see your husband passing through your house to sleep with another woman.

Women in marriage do not get a chance to come up with their own views. Men want to be the people who make decisions and final arrangements in the family. This is seen in the dialogue between Sigqibo and his wife Nolasti when they are arguing about taking their son to his boarding school.

Sigqibo: Yibambe apho kanye. Andizukuxelelwa nguwe ukuba yintoni ebalulekileyo nengabalulekanga ngomntwana wam.

(“Iinkunzi Ezimbini”, 1994: 28)

Sigqibo: Hold it there. I am not going to be told by you what is and what is not important about my child.

Nolasti is also Luvuyo’s, mother. and she has every right to make a decision about her son’s future. But Sigqibo views Nolasti’s suggestion as that of a minor. that is why he decides to dispute it and put his views forward:

Sigqibo: Elokugqibela iseleliya lokuqala. uLuvuyo uza kufunda apha eMachubeni.

(“Iinkunzi Ezimbini”, 1994: 28)

Sigqibo: ... The last is still the first one. Luvuyo is going to study here at Machubeni.

Sigqibo is not interested in asking Nolasti the reason for her suggestion. but because it comes from her as woman (even though she is his wife) he does not want to give it a chance, as he will be viewed as a person who listens to women’s views about his son.

Gender inequality in the marriage situation affects mostly wives. First of all. everything starts at home. Men are the ones who perpetuate this inequality because they always look at how their wives treat them and respect them. They are the ones who differentiate work at home by saying they cannot do domestic work like cooking, sweeping, and child rearing. On the other hand it is rare to find women complaining about the kind of work they are doing. It is also rare to hear them saying “I cannot perform a certain job because it is a man’s job”.

6.7 SEXUAL DIVISION OF LABOUR

Let us first hear from the respondents:

- Kitchen work is meant to be done by women.
- I grew up at home where my mother used to stress the fact that boys are not supposed to wash dishes, their work is in the garden.
- You know, women do not have problem in the kind of work they perform. They can do whatever work, even the one that is said to be men's work.
- Yes, I accept that our work is around at home and with child rearing but that does not mean that we are doing less or unimportant jobs. If women were not there to do house work and look after the children and their men. I bet, men were going to suffer for the rest of their lives.
- I say they are going to suffer because they cling too much to this work differentiation as compared to women.
- Do you know that even if man is not around everything is going to be in order at home because women are jacks of all trades?
- I like the way women behave. They don't have time to complain about who's supposed to do what or not.
- Fortunately here in my home there is always a woman around so I won't be affected at all.

- If it might happen that she leaves I will ask her to make my dish of sour milk ready or my dish of samp.
- I do go to the kitchen, but you somehow feel you do not belong there.
- I do not have business with children. My only duty is to teach my boy when he is older what the society expects of him.
- A mother is the person who has an attachment to the children more than the fathers because she is the one who first bonds with them at birth.
- Women take care of their children, both girls and boys. They do not prefer girls over boys or send boys to their fathers to be taught what to do. They can do it themselves.
- These days educated people, let me say men, they do any kind of job. they cook, look after their kids when their wives are studying, wash them, sweep the floor, wash the clothes and many more.
- They are not ashamed of doing this work, you can even see some of them carrying their kids in town without any fear. That is what is happening these days.
- Yes, sexual division of labour is there but time is trying to chase that away, although some people will still believe that there is female and male work.

The above respondents, especially those who were talking on behalf of enlightened women, praise women for their courageous work and for the way they handle their work. From the above information we come to notice that it is not in the culture of women to complain about work differentiation. When it comes to work they work without saying they cannot do this and that. In some cases we notice that childhood socialization plays a very prominent role in moulding someone's behaviour at a later stage. This is evident from some respondents who do not see anything wrong with work differentiation because they were raised the same way

by their parents.

Mazumdar and Sharma in Tinker (1990) observe that the sexual division of labour has been considered a key variable in the analysis of women's subordination. In many cases work is being divided according to people's sex. People grew up knowing that there are male and female jobs. Children are socialised early in their lives as to what their roles will be when they reach adulthood. Girls grow up knowing that a woman's place is in the kitchen where she has to keep herself busy with household chores such as cooking, washing, sweeping and so on. Krige (1950: 184) expresses this:

On the whole, the rougher tasks requiring strength are done by the men, while to the women falls the work that requires more continuous attention. The housework naturally falls within the sphere of woman's activities and cooking and beer making, sweeping, washing of utensils and the fetching of firewood and water are the work of women. In this they are helped by their daughters, who at an early age begin to fetch water, sweep, and look after their baby brothers and sisters.

Krige in his statement emphasises the idea of job differentiation between sexes. Women's work is more domestic and strength requiring, although the value of their work is looked down upon by the people who benefit from women's work. Swartbooi in "UMandisa" portrays what Krige has already explained about women being involved in different work around the house.

Nanko uMamNzothwa eququzela phakathi
kwaloo mzi sesiwuchazile. Yonke into ijonge
yena, njengokuba kungekho mantombazana.
Kangangokukhuthala kwakhe, wayengawazele

nto umsebenzi konke waloo mzi wakhe, kuba
wayeqhele kwakowabo kwaBambela,
ukusebenza ngolu hlobo ...

(“UMandisa”, 1975: 7)

There is MamNzothwa busy around the home that we already talked about. Everything is waiting for her, as there are no females. She was so quiet in such a way that she did not even feel the load of her homestead work because she was used to this kind of work from her Bambela home.

Swartbooi depicts a woman who loves her housework. MamNzothwa’s keenness towards her housework was instigated by her mother at home. She was told from an early age that a girl/woman is supposed to perform certain duties, and that is why she does not find it difficult to perform work in her husband’s homestead. She knows that if she does not do her work no one will do it except other women, but unfortunately she was the only one together with her mother-in-law. MamNzothwa, Mandisa’s mother, socializes her child Mandisa to know housework in her early life. This work is associated with women because they own the “small space in their bodies”.

Kaloku mntwan’am kufuneka umke ukhe
wandingqushisa, wakha namanzi ... waya eziko,
apho akhona unina. uthe uMandisa xa esel’
eza kulikhupha elesibini ibinza, kusasele elinye,
wafika unina ethwele inyanda yeenkuni

(“UMandisa”, 1975: 17)

My child, you must help me with some work and
you must fetch water before you leave ...

she went to the fire, where her mother was ...

When Mandisa was about to take the second wood
her mother arrived with a bundle of wood.

Mandisa is going to grow up knowing that stamping mealies, fetching water and similar jobs are girls' or womens' work. When she is an adult she will continue doing the same because that is what she was taught by her mother. In "Iinkunzi Ezimbini", Sigqibo does not want to go to the kitchen to fetch a piece of meat for himself because he claims that as a man he cannot go to the kitchen. This means that he sees the kitchen as a woman's place.

Sigqibo: ... Nokwenza ndikuthuma ezimbizeni apho
ndingenakuya mna. Uthi mandithini ke, ndiye
kujingisa intshebe ekhitshini ndinomfazi?
(*"Iinkunzi ezimbini"*, 1994: 38)

Sigqibo: ... For that matter I am sending you to the pots
where I cannot go. What must I do, must I go
with long beard in the kitchen having a wife?

6.8 DEFIANCE OF GENDER INEQUALITY

Women are usually the ones who are involved in this defiance because they are the ones who are mostly affected by this inequality. In most cases culture is always on the side of men, that is why it is rare to hear men protesting against inequality. Instead, men do not like the idea of women protesting against inequality because they say they cannot be equal with women.

Nolasti in "Iinkunzi Ezimbini" defies the African tradition that always puts men as the head and women as the tail. According to Freud's view and those of the traditionalists Nolasti is a very narcissistic person. Reber (1985: 462) explains narcissism as:

A personality disorder characterised by an exaggerated sense of self importance ... pre-occupation with fantasies of success, wealth, power, esteem or ideal love and inappropriate emotional reactions to the criticism of others.

Nolasti wants to take part in the well being of her family. She does not want to be treated as if she is not there and she does not want her husband to dispute her suggestion and her views without any valid reason, except that she cannot be the last one to say the last word. She wants to fight for women's rights to have a say in their houses, because it is important to her. Self importance, or we should rather say women's importance, is very significant for her. Nolasti, in the women's gathering at church, utters these words:

Nolasti: ... Masimcaphule kulaa ncwadi wayeyibhalela
abaseKolose kwisahluko sesithathu ivesi yeshumi
elinethoba xa esithi "Nina madoda, bathandeni abafazi
benu. ningabi bukhali kubo." Ngelishwa ke abethu
abayeni babukhali ngohlobo olungathethekiyo kuthi.
abasiniki thuba lakuthetha emizini yethu silapha nje
ke sifuna ukukhe sifakane imilomo ngohlobo
esinokuphucula ngalo. impatho yabasetyhini.

("Iinkunzi Ezimbini", 1994: 25)

Nolasti: Let us quote him from that book of Colossians chapter
three verse nineteen. When he says, 'Men love your
wives and not be too bold to them'. Unfortunately our men
are so bold to us, they do not give us time to talk in
our houses. We are here to talk with each other
on how we can change our way of life.

The pressure that these women endure from their men makes them to think of defying all forms of respect. This pressure that these women express is stored in their unconscious mind and comes out by means of slips of their tongues. Nolasti's reply to Sigqibo exposes what is repressed in her unconscious. She reveals her feelings about how she and other women want to be treated by their male counterparts.

Nolasti: Inene uyavuya wena mfo wasemaJwarheni!
 Uhleli ezantsi kobuhlanti le njikalanga yonke
 sipixa ezimbizeni thina kanti uza kuthi kwakugqitywa
 ufuneyama ... Uyabona kodwa ukuba ndilungiselela
 ukulala ngoku? Uthi mandiyeke le nto ndiyenzayo
 ndenze le ifunwa nguwe, ngeli xesha uyifuna ngayo?
 ("Iinkunzi Ezimbini", 1994: 38)

Nolasti: You are happy, Jwarha! You were sitting by the kraal
 all along, we are busy cooking, and all of a sudden
 you ask for meat ... Do you see that I am preparing
 to sleep now? You are saying I must stop what I am
 doing and do what you want at the time you want it?

Nolasti does not want to be treated as a minor by her husband. She wants her husband to understand when she is busy and when she is free to do something. Nolasti's lack of respect is linked to the idea that men possess women. They take women as people who can be directed anywhere for their own sake. Sigqibo, Nolasti's husband, asks Nolasti to bring meat for him because he does not want to go to the kitchen. On the other hand Nolasti refuses because she wants her husband to realise that he can go to his kitchen and take whatever he wants. By doing this she is trying to destroy these gender inequalities that are on the minds of people and are largely perpetuated by African tradition and lack of education. The reason why the researcher is saying this, is that Nolasti is an enlightened woman and that is why she has the power to fight against inequality. Nksk White shows her feelings against women abuse:

Nksk. White: "What's wrong with her? How can she enjoy being an assault victim? Is this their kind of love? To think that I've been advising her against this bully for such a long time! Now he's finally assaulted her. She wouldn't be in this mess now if she had listened to me in the first place ... I'm I sure will never understand these people".

("Iinkunzi Ezimbini", 1994: 40)

Nolasti's defiance of inequality has an effect at home as she is married into a polygamous marriage. Every time she tries to argue with her husband Sigqibo, her husband, transfers her anger to other wives. Transference is a psychoanalytical symptom which is defined as the passing on, or displacing or "transferring" of an emotion or affective attitude, from one person on to another person or object (Reber, 1985: 785). Nofinishi and Nokhaya experience unfair treatment and negative transference from their husband Sigqibo. They once talk this out, voicing their concern about this.

Nofinishi: ... Ungakhe undincede undilungiselele umyeni lo wam.

Nolasti: Andikulandeli MaMfene. Ndikulungiselele njani umyeni wakho?

Nofinishi: Sukuzenza umnawukana Nolasti. Nguwe owenza ukuba lo mfo asoloko elugcwabevu ngumsindo. Phambi kokuba ufike kulo mtyanti yayingekho yonke le milo, kodwa oko wafika ekhapha akukho xolo.

("Iinkunzi Ezimbini", 1994: 20)

Nofinishi: ... Could you help me and mould my husband?

Nolasti: I do not understand you, MaMfene. How can I mould your husband?

Nofinishi: Don't make yourself a fool Nolasti. It is you who drive this man to be aggressive. It was not like this before you come in this house, but ever since you came here there is no peace.

Nolasti's rebellious behaviour affects the happiness of other members of the family. Nolasti internalizes the clash between personal freedom and African societal values.

6.9 CONCLUSION

In the above discussion we have noticed that women are the people who are mostly affected by gender inequality. Traditional culture plays a prominent role in oppressing women. Men have used and still use traditional culture in order to benefit themselves at the expense of women. The way men hold to these gender inequalities shows that somewhere in their subconscious mind they fear that if they give women a chance they will be overpowered. Looking at the above discussion and from the voices of the respondents we can see that equality is still far from being implemented, because traditional African culture does not encourage the equality of sexes in so many ways. Even the people out there still do not want to accept the new changes; there are only a few who accept the fact that there is a need to consider women's efforts without comparing them to anyone else's. These few people we are talking about agree with the womanism philosophy that there must be unity of blacks everywhere under the enlightened control of men and women.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

7.1 Looking back

This chapter will look at our achievements thus far, in order to make sure that we have reached the goal we stated at the beginning. Concluding remarks will round off the thesis.

The foregoing chapters reveal different women's views in various parts of Africa about themselves as women, about how society is treating them and about how it is supposed to treat them. The language they use as their voice and as their means of communication was very clear. In the African traditional canons women writers portray the way women are being treated in the traditional homestead and also what the society expects of them. In terms of western principles African women writers reveal the flexibility of these principles for women. In the western world women are given a chance to prove themselves and they are also portrayed as people who can stand on their own without the help of men. In the voices of African women writers, these writers are articulating out their feelings as women and they show their commitment as African women writers by means of alerting people about what was left behind by their male counterparts. In beyond gender inequality it is shown that women are the most affected people and because of that some of them unshackle themselves from those chains by means of deviance.

7.2 Concluding Remarks

In their voices their commitment is heard. These women writers examined in this study portray characters who break the continuum of pain by resisting any oppressive cultural pattern, thus leaving the generation to come with joy rather than with pain. In Ba's "So long a letter" the writer portrays two women who live without men because they rejected

polygamous marriages in their lives. We also notice that in "Maru" by Head, Margaret proves to the people that there is nothing to be ashamed of when you are of mixed blood. Those who do not want to accept one should be considered as neurotic and lost.

Most African women writers do not want to be labelled as feminist, they want to be called womanist. Although some of them incorporate feminist views in their work, they say they do not want to be defined by other people, they want to define themselves as they wish.

Davies and Fido in their essay entitled 'African women writers' edited by Owomoyela (1993:338-339) explain that:

Not every woman who makes a statement through writing is necessarily a feminist. There is a tendency to ascribe feminism to a woman writer simply because she shows women grappling with society's definitions of women. A number of African women writers dislike the label feminist, but not its politics. Nwapa, for example, says in an interview with Alison Terry in 1984: Just because I write about women, people accused me of being feminist. But she accepts Alice Walker's term 'womanist' because it conveys a commitment to the survival and wholeness of the entire people, male and female. Aidoo also says, I shall not protest if you call me a feminist. But I am not a feminist because I write about women. Similarly, Emecheta has expressed difficulties with the application of the term. According to Emecheta, I will not be

called a feminist here, because it is European.

It is as simple as that: I just resent that.

Otherwise, if you look at everything I do, it is what the feminist do, too, but it is just that it comes from Europe, or European women, and I don't like being defined by them.

The Mexican woman writer Molina has also rejected the term feminist. In her interview with De Beer (1996:63) she says, "I always have problems with the term "feminine" even if I don't feel that I'm a feminist or anything recognise that in my work there is perhaps a feminine point of view. " The critics, in particular, have said that my work is very supple and that my use of language is transparent and very delicate. But I always have something of a problem with that term. I prefer not to talk about feminine or feminist literature but rather about literature written by women".

Morris (1993) perceives writing by women as something that can tell the story of the aspects of women's lives that have been erased, ignored, demeaned, mystified and even idealised in the majority of traditional texts. The positive feature in women's writing is the recognition of the bonds of friendship, loyalty and love existing between women. Writing by women can redress the wrong things that male writers said about them, by celebrating women's sexuality and articulating the pleasure and beauty of the female body without shame or apology.

Morris (1993:67) explains the secret message of literature by women as follows:

...Even the most apparently conservative and decorous women writers obsessively create fiercely independent characters who seek to destroy all patriarchal structures which both their authors and their authors' submissive heroines seem to accept as inevitable.

It is also mentioned that education constitutes power in Emecheta's books in two ways. According to Jones and Palmer (1987) Emecheta's books equip women to be economically independent, to prepare for a job or profession that will enable them to take care of themselves and their children without the help and protection of men. Perhaps just as importantly, though, education also gives women a vision of human experience beyond the narrow confines of their own lives, it bestows a kind of imaginative power, a breadth to Emecheta's heroines. Even if they cannot literally escape the imprisoning constraints of their patriarchal world they can imaginatively transcend them through the means of books.

Wives who write experience problems of being belittled, that their writing is ignored or marginalised and that when they write they are seen as people who are beginning feminine qualities that they are suppose to represent in life generally to the established male texts.

7.3 Findings of the study

The women that I have interviewed in chapter four under the sub-topic 'women without men' show different views about women without men. Women from urban areas and literate women do not see any harm in surviving without men. They view themselves as their own masters and stress their independence in life. This is also proved by the literary texts that have been quoted in this chapter under the same sub-topic. These women mentioned in these texts demonstrate their independence and survival without men.

In the case of rural and illiterate women without men, we have discovered that these women are more dependent on their men. They do not celebrate a life of being alone as women.

In chapter three, which dealt with the canons of African traditions. women that we have interviewed show love and respect for their culture. They show happiness as long as they are doing what is expected of them in the society. One of them called herself the mother of the soil.

Literary texts that have been used in chapters three and four, correlate with the data that was gathered in the field. This means that what is being written by the authors reveals the real situation.

7.4 Problematic areas established

The fact that women who are childless are being battered and assaulted by their husbands and their in-laws is an extremely serious and problematic issue which needs to be considered very closely because it has detrimental results, as in some cases the victim will commit suicide, or commit adultery. In some cases these women who are childless or who are accused of being childless are not the ones who are at fault but their loved ones or their husbands are. Childlessness should be looked at as an issue for both partners, not for a woman only.

Women who are widows also have problems with their society, they are not accepted as normal human beings. The reason for the isolation of these women is the clothing that they have to wear during this period. The question is, why do women have to wear mourning clothes but men don't? If women are being forced, or feel it is right, to wear these clothes, the community has to accept their situation and treat them as normal people and as part of their society, not as outcasts.

The tone that was used by both these groups of women, that is, the childless and widows, was the tone of troubled women. Not all of them suffer but most of them do.

This work has tried to explain the Traditional canons and Western values and people's reaction towards them. Women writers experiences and their reactions towards issues that affect their lives were also given consideration. We applaud the steps taken by women writers discussed above as their views will help other women out there to view themselves positively.

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APPENDIX

Approximately five women from different families in every rural and urban area were interviewed, although in some places more women made themselves available for interviews. A number of questions were asked of these women. The following are some of them:

QUESTIONNAIRE

WOMEN IN GENERAL

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Are you married? (if it is no)
2. Would you wish to get married someday(why?)
3. (If married)How can you describe marriage?
4. Would like to have co-wives?
5. Do you have children?(if yes)
6. The time you were pregnant did you have preference of sex?(why?)
7. Which age would you regard as the right age to get married?
8. Would you choose /your husband will he choose a husband for your daughter and why?

9. What can you do if your husband/boyfriend can abuse you?
10. How important is the virginity of a woman to her future and why?
11. You know your husband/boyfriend/father how do you think he can react if one of your daughter's can get pregnant while at school/at home?
12. And what about you?
13. How does womanhood means to you?
14. How does motherhood means to you?
15. When one is regarded as a mother, woman?
16. How do you feel about patriarchy?
17. What are your views about division of work at home?

MARRIED WOMEN

18. As a woman with daughters, when one of your girls reach a womanhood stage how would you feel as a mother?
19. Did you/would you share your feelings with your husband?
20. If already shared what was the husband response to that?
21. How do you cope with house work(if employed)?

22. Do you have enough time to spend with your family?
23. How can you describe domestic work?(house wife)
24. At what time do you have to wake up in the morning and start with your daily work?
25. Is it not boring to stay at home seeing no deferent faces?
26. Would you like to be employed one day and why?
27. Tell us about your relationship with your in-laws?

MARRIED WOMEN WHO CANNOT GET CHILDREN

28. As a woman who is married but unable to get children. How does this affect you personally as an individual, your husband (his reaction to this) your family, your in-laws?
29. In this situation do you think you are the one who cannot get children and why?
30. Do you think your husband can leave for another person?
31. How is the marriage relationship with your husband? Does this problem affect your marriage life?
32. What are your resolutions to the whole issue?

33. What can you say to other women out there who are in a similar situation?

MARRIED WITH DAUGHTERS

34. As you've given birth to the girls only, what are your feelings to that? Your husbands? Your in-laws?
35. So what are your future plans for them?
36. Is any thing special in having a baby daughter? what about a baby boy?

UNMARRIED

37. How is like to stay single?
38. Would you like to have children out of wedlock and why?
39. What are your views about men?
40. How can you describe the friendship amongst women?

MARRIED AND DIVORCE

41. Why did you have to divorce?

- 42. Who came up with the suggestion?
- 43. How do you feel now to stay without your husband?
- 44. What about financial, economical problems?
- 45. How are the children coping?(if any)

WIDOWED

- 46. Would you like to get married again and why?
- 47. How do you feel about the custom of "ukungenwa"?
- 48. For how long would you think you will stay without a man?
- 49. Tell us your personal view of mourning: How do you feel about it?
- 50. Does it affect you at work? Socially? How do other people look at you?

IN POLYGAMOUS MARRIAGE

- 51. How do you feel about being in a polygamous marriage?

52. Is there any jealousy between you and other wives?
53. Who is supporting the families?
54. How do you feel when a husband go and sleep with the other wife?
55. How's the children relationship?
56. Is there any jealousy between co-wives in connection with children's progress and so forth?
57. So what is going to happen to you if your husband can die?
58. Are you all married in the same way? like in church or you had a traditional marriage?
59. Would you regard your husband as a head of the family and provider even if you are the one who is looking after the family?
60. What is your personal interpretation of the head of the family?
61. Would you like to see your children educated both girls and boys? Why?
62. How do you share house work with your wives?
63. Do you have to make turns to cook for your husband ? Or he chooses for himself the wife to cook for him?
64. How do you prepare meals for the family as a whole (does one have to

prepare for her own house hold?)

65. How do you feel about losing your name when you are married (like the idea of being given other name?)

UNMARRIED(PROFESSIONAL)

66. Would you prefer to be a career woman or family woman or both and why?
67. As you are now an independent woman with your own belongings. How do you think you can react in a marriage situation?
68. What type of a husband would you prefer and why?
69. Do you wish to get married or you want to stay single? Why?

NB: OTHER QUESTIONS WILL DEVELOP AS THE INTERVIEW PROGRESSES

In all the authors of the cited texts few of them were able to be reached one of them I was able to meet face to face and tape recording was done. The other I was able to talk to her over the telephone due to her commitments.