CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Violence has remained a very complex subject which takes different dimensions in societies of the world today. It is not only a global issue which violates human rights, but a challenge to everyone. Currently, violence seems to be very rampant in many societies because some fundamental human rights are abused without any strict monitoring or form of severe punishment to the offenders. As a result, individuals are physically, emotionally and psychologically harmed through violent actions or behaviours. Based on the above consequences, it is right to say that violence negates the need for justice, tolerance, mutual respect and dignity for human life.

Undoubtably, violence is an abuse of human rights which impedes on the establishment of healthy and rewarding relationships. Violence occurs when there is a violation of human rights such as freedom of speech, freedom of movement and freedom of choice as seen in rape, forced marriage, gender discrimination and oppression. Unarguably, a victim of violence may react to violence by abusing other people in society or hurting herself. By doing so, violence is reproduced and perpetuated in society. Thus, violence becomes a serious problem that must be eradicated to achieve harmony in society.

Generally, violence may be political, personal, social, cultural, religious or economic depending on the situations surrounding a given society. It is perceived as any form of treatment that causes injury or damage to an individual or a group of persons. The term “violence” according to World Health Organization is “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual,

against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation" (Krug et al *World Report on Violence and Health* 1). According to *Black Law Dictionary*, "violence is synonymous with 'physical force', and the two are used interchangeably, in relation to assaults" (1). Kristine Jacquin also sees violence as an act of physical force that causes or is intended to cause harm" (1). Jacquin further asserts that "the damage inflicted by violence may be physical, psychological, or both" (1). The above definitions stress the destructive nature of violence as a universal phenomenon which varies vastly throughtout the world. Based on the above view, Remi Anifowose observes that "Violence has been used by groups seeking power, by groups holding power and by groups in the process of losing power" (*Violence in Politics* 1). Anifowose further explains that violence has been pursued in "the defense of order by the privileged, in the name of justice by the oppressed and in fear of displacement by the threatened" (1).

The concept, nature and scope of violence are varied and complex. In fact, the definition of violence is interpreted based on "the act of force or in terms of a violation" (Bufacchi 193). According to Vittorio Bufacchi,

> Those who define violence as an international act of excessive or destructive force endorse a narrow conception of violence (the Minimalist Conception of Violence or MCV), while those who see violence in terms of a violation of rights champion a broader conception of violence (the Comprehensive Conception of Violence or CCV). (193)

The views above unarguably separate the nature of physical violence from the problems of violations. In fact, the issue of violence has remained a topic of serious debate because it involves an act of inflicting emotional and physical injury. This debate on violence is significant as a result of the manner in which violence is related to force. Dewey argues that "violence is

force gone wrong, or, put in another way, force that is destructive and harmful: energy becomes violence when it defeats or frustrates purposes instead of executing or realizing it" (qtd. in Bufacchi 195). Significantly, Dewey stresses that "when the dynamite charge blows up human beings instead of rocks, when its outcome is waste instead of production, destruction instead of construction, we call it not energy or power but violence" (qtd. in Bufacchi 195). Steger, for instance, sees violence as "the intentional infliction of physical or psychological injury on a person or persons" (13). Steger's argument is very clear because his definition possesses a prominent characteristic that interprets violence as a deliberate act of causing pain. Therefore, defining violence within the scope of intentional or deliberate act, is an indication that an individual purposely uses "physical violence in a way that blocks another's exercise of her legitimate claim-rights" (Pogge 67).

Violence is a very complex task because specific acts of violence occur in different cultural milieux. Therefore, to different cultural milieux, a certain act of violence, whether by omissions or through deliberate actions could be interpreted differently based on the existing law guiding them. In essence, understanding the meaning of violence as a universal concept must be done by accepting that violence is bad and wrong since it is a form of infringement. Indeed, the attempts to further interpret 'violence and violation' have caused unending confusion leading to diverse opinions. This is because some acts of violence (physical force) may occur without violating the moral rights of individuals as seen in boxing, wrestling and other actions which are committed through the act of force under law or agreement. Bufacchi reiterates the above view by emphasizing that "while acts of physical force often entail some form of violations, there are times when a violation occurs without the need of any physical force, or, alternatively, acts of physical force may take place without anything or anyone being violated" (194). For this

efficient cause, the issues of violence are approached to identify various ways violence of different forms can lead to the violation of fundamental human rights.

Zizek Slavoj goes further to categorize "violence into subjective and objective violence" (6). According to Slavoj,

> Subjective violence is just the most visible portion of a triumvirate that also includes two objective kinds of violence. First, is a 'symbolic' violence embodied in language and its form, what Heidegger would call 'our house of being'….This violence is obvious in the cases of incitement and of the relations of social domination reproduced in our habitual speech forms…Second, there is a 'systemic violence', or the often catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems. (6)

The above submission by Slavoj is directly linked to the stereotypical linguistic expressions that undermine the self-worth of individuals, especially the female gender. Through these linguistic expressions, violence is verbally, emotionally and psychologically perpetrated in order to constantly put the female gender in oppressive conditions. Slavoj further stresses the view that "subjective and objective violence cannot be perceived from the same standpoint: subjective violence is experienced as such against the background of a non-violent zero level. It is seen as a perturbation of the 'normal', peaceful state of things" (7). However, objective violence is precisely the violence inherent to this "normal' state of things" (7). Slavoj's explanation on violence is probably right because every act of force involves the infliction of physical or emotional pain. This suggests that opinions on violence are based upon the feelings that it causes damage to individuals and the society. Slavoj further stresses that,

> Objective violence is invisible since it sustains the very zero-level standard against which we perceive something as subjective. On the other hand, systemic violence is something like the notorious 'dark matter' of physics, the counterpart to an all-too-visible subjective violence. It may be invisible, but it has to be taken into account if one is to make sense of what otherwise seems to be 'irrational' explosions of subjective violence. (8)

Slavoj's views on violence point to the abuse of human rights which occurs when the actions by individuals and society lead to the denial of fundamental human rights thus encouraging subjugation, rape, trafficking, oppression, slavery etc. This discussion on violence is thus summarized by categorically stating Slavoj's view that "the obvious signals of violence are acts of crime and terror, civil unrest, international conflict" (5).

Significantly, the above discussions on violence are all embracing as they capture different forms of violence against men, women and children. Since acts of violence are directed against a person or a group of persons, therefore, it is important to understand that violence is harmful because it reduces human and economic growth. Thus, there is need for people to increase their understanding of this complex phenomenon in order to effectively tackle it.

Currently, the general perception of violence in reality and the negative portraiture in literature have been attributed to extreme force, injustice, violation, rape, pain, suffering or actions which cause destruction. Most societies are characterized by violence which is a "prevalent problem with substantial physical and mental health consequences" (Kilpatrick 1209). According to Nancy Russo and Angela Pirlott, violence often results in "physical injury, pain or impairment" (178). Randall Collins observes that violence is "about the intertwining of human emotions of fear, anger and excitement, in ways that run right against the conventional morality of normal situations" (24). Rory Miller therefore asserts that "violence is dangerous and it hurts and there is no guaranteed win, but an act of force is the only thing that can stop an act of violence" (7). Gary Slutkin lends credence to Miller's submission by stating that "violence should be treated as a disease" (www.cureviolence.org).

Violence in the world today, has taken a new and frightening dimension though it is not a recent phenomenon. Gareth Cook in "History and the Decline of Human Violence" states that its history is linked to human nature which may "embrace motives that lead to aggression" (1). In addition, Diane Delaney points out that "the environment affects our emotions and our behaviour, and our actions affect those around us and our environment in general" (5). Delaney further stresses that,

> The roots of violence can be examined by focusing on unequal power relations and oppressive social structures but must also include psychological dynamics and a philosophical understanding of our values and ethics and what we are striving to become as individuals and communities. (5)

In Africa, scholars have traced the roots of violence to patriarchy, civil war, terrorism, politics, ethnic, religious, cultural and tribal diversities. As such, African societies which are indeed varied and complex produce different forms of violence, such as wars of decolonization, secessionist struggles, guerilla insurgencies, coups, kidnappings etc. John Bugnacki in "Critical Issues Facing Africa: Terrorism, War and Political Violence" observes that " Africa, the continent as a whole experienced in its recent history widespread protests, unrest, civil wars, and insurgencies" (3). Similarly, Chuka Enuka notes that,

> Peace appeared to have eluded Africa given the prevalence of increased civil strife and military conflicts in many parts of the continent with attendant and concomitant genocidal incidences, horrendous destructions and displacements with a possible spillover effect to the rest of the continent. (11)

A. Nass also points out that the "African continent by this eruption has without doubt, been adjudged the home and theater of the world's most brutal conflicts" (qtd. in Enuka, "Nigeria's Peace Roles", 11). As a result of these violent political issues or conflicts, Charles Dokubo observes that Africa has been unable to embark on any meaningful development and has

"assumed epidemic proportions and an impediment to development" (qtd. in Enuka, "Nigeria's Peace Roles" 11).

In the western and southern parts of Africa, as in other parts of Africa, the dramatic rise of terrorism, xenophobic attacks and lack of good democracy has resorted to violation, denial of rights and freedom. A cross-sectional study of violence has shown that rape, brutality, and killings are strongly connected to the "normative use of violence in conflict situations or as part of the exercise of power" (Jewkes, Levin and Penn-Kekana 1603). Indeed, the experiences of Nigeria, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Liberia, Ethiopia, Somalia and others offer good examples of situations which expose individuals to inhuman treatments. According to UNICEF, violence against children, especially girls are visible in many parts of Africa, because they follow global patterns and social norms that are usually not documented (1). In Nigeria, violence is caused by cultural norms, activities of terrorists groups (Boko Haram), individual aggression, domestic problems, poverty and other forms of insecurities. In Zimbabwe, civil unrest and rebellion are the major causes of rape, sexual assult and oppression against girls. In Somalia, Islamic religious traditional law and cultural norms (cultural rape, bartering, forced marriage, female circumcision) have silenced and trampled upon the rights of girls and women. The above violations are indeed psychologically demanding and could cause depression or other mental disorders leading to neurosis. It is apparent, therefore, that the aftermath of different forms of violence may result in the denial of people's rights or freedom which might cause physical injury or psychological trauma. Hence, the prevalence of different forms of physical abuse or cruel treatment against individuals is a major concern which must be tackled in order to curb some problems which might affect their growth, self-worth and psychological well-being.

This research does not explore violence as a broad topic, but is particularly interested in gender-based violence. Colomba Muriungi and Anne Muriiki observe that,

> The term "gender-based violence" is controversial because while some scholars see it as violence against women, recent definitions tend to connect it with all acts of violence rooted in some form of patriarchal ideology, and can thus be committed against both women and men. Gender-based violence is therefore an umbrella term for any harm perpetrated against a person's will and it could be physical, sexual, psychological, economic, or socio-cultural. Violence is thus a means of control. (117)

In this context, gender-based violence is perceived as any form of violence against the female gender as regards the girl-child. Gender-based violence is directed against the female gender because she is a girl or woman. According to the *United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Woman*, article 1, "gender-based violence results in physical sexual or psychological or economic harm or suffering of woman including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life"(2). The article 2 further explains that "it is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between man and woman. Hence, it is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which the woman is forced into subordination" (2). Olawale Albert offers another definition of gender-based violence to include, but not limited to:

> Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation. (7)

R.H. Walters and R.D. Parke maintain that "gender-based violence is culturally determined. As a result, it gives people the privilege to harm others based on their cultural backgrounds and beliefs which they do not perceive acts as violence" (231). In most cases, these acts are often

accompanied by abusive behaviour that has a forceful pattern of dominance and control over the victims.

Girls are subjected to violence of different forms as a result of some cultural, social, economic or political issues emanating from the actions of men, women or even the victims in society. In some situations, the incidents of violence against girls are not condemned publicly, except in cases of extreme physical abuse, yet, in different societies, girls' lives are shaped by threats of violence often present in cultures characterized by patriarchal traits. Such violent acts manifest in the form of forced marriage, rape, gender stereotyping and inequality.

Forced marriage violates the rights of the girl-child and limits her growth and development in society as an individual. It is a marriage contracted without the "valid consent of one or more parties usually through physical violence or psychological pressure" (Sharp 6). This is a common practice in some African societies characterized by religion and cultural traditions. In these societies, girls are sold or given in marriage before maturity for cultural reasons, economic and social gains. This grossly affects their emotional development, health and educational opportunities in a negative way.

Rape or sexual abuse is another most predominant form of violence against the girl-child. P. Ebony explains that "rape is an expression of sexual aggression rather than an expression of sexuality. Rape is rooted in non-sexual motivation in the psychology of the offender; it is tied to hostility and anger, and the need to exert power and control" (16). Rape is often carried out through physical force against the wish of the victims and this is capable of causing psychological trauma.

The problem of gender stereotyping and inequality between sexes is a serious problem. Male-induced subjugation and oppression of the female gender have become so rampant in the traditional African milieux. Most of these societies which are patriarchal attach undue importance to the male, while the female constantly wears the badge of inferiority. This patriarchal ideology "upholds masculine authority and depicts man as transcendent – going far beyond ordinary limits" (Deckard 5). In Rose Acholonu's view, "the pre-literate Nigerian society is remarkable for its clear definition of roles. The man is the head of the family, and his status or role as a male is sacred and supreme. The female, on the other hand, is comparatively subjugated to an inferior secondary position" ("The Female Predicament" 38). Acholonu also stresses the fact that "male domineering influence over the female is institutionalized and threatening" ("The Female Predicament" 38). In many cases, sons are often appreciated and constantly encouraged to participate in social activities, while girls are subjugated to some cultural practices that limit their freedom, growth and development. Thus, gender-based violence against girls and women still remains a sensitive medium by which they are forced into a subordinate position.

This study on gender-based violence cannot be complete without any focus on literature which is a medium through which people's experiences, lifestyles and other socio-cultural and economic issues are documented. Literature reflects the norms and moral values of a given milieu. It explores the political, social, cultural, economic, psychological, domestic and spiritual experiences of people. Based on this premise Ernest Emenyonu asserts that "the literature of a people must be an imaginative recreation of a people's account of their social, cultural, political and economic perspective at a given time and place" (qtd. in Nnolim, *Issues in African Literature* 11).

In literature, gender-based violence is documented in order to present the social, cultural and economic conditions that contribute to such inhuman acts. African literature explores violent practices or behaviours in the context of African value systems and structures. It performs the function of representing African experiences in order to correct, enlighten, and teach morals. Thus, the discussion presents literature as a reflection of people's experiences and a useful medium for correcting social vices.

Writers and critics of African literature have dedicated their literary energy in exploring societal issues relating to traditions, gender-based violence, revolution, politics, religion, economy and other social problems which have directly or indirectly affected a given cultural milieu. Their knowledge about people and society has, to a large extent, provided them with the needed platform to argue or present the plight of individuals in society. In view of the above, Ifeyinwa Ogbazi in "Women Writers and Social Regeneration: (Re) Reading Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Okoye's *Men Without Ears*" observes that:

> Literary artists are able to explore the varied nature of human society because they are armed with such acute sensitivity and sensibility which allow them to make an in-depth examination of the life of the community they are acquainted with. With an acute perception, they do not aim at just mirroring societal events as they occur, but also their major pre-occupation is to interpret the life of this society. (77)

On this note, Afamefuna Ezeaku in "Feminist Positionality: An Overview of Nigerian Literary Scene" explains that "literature has been observed to be the most potent or vocal medium through which the case of the place of the women in the scheme of things within the male-dominated society is explored" (22).

The problem of gender-based violence is not new in African literature. The earliest works of some African novelists and playwrights have "encouraged the marginalization of girls and

women" (Kolawole, *Womanism* 2). Charles Larson further observes that in some of these male-authored novels, "female characters almost play no significant part, if they are present, they are mere objects performing a function" (qtd. in Acholonu, "The Female Predicament", 39). This representation is evident in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Cyprain Ekwensi's *Jagua Nana* (1961), Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* (1963) and Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine* (1966) where the female gender is made marginal in the story. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe's social construction of gender in a patriarchal African setting is so glaring. Okonkwo's masculine prejudices about his daughter, Ezinma, wives and Nwoye (his son) have aroused the feminist debate condemning Achebe as a literary patriarch. In Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine*, Madume's negative perception and denigration of his wife's personality have increased feminist sentiment. Also, the brutalization of the female gender in Achebe's novels as well as the negative portrayal of the image of girls and women in Cyprain Ekwensi's *Jagua Nana* as the embodiment of obscene sexuality has constantly placed their novels under attack by feminists. This negative portrayal according to Mary Modupe Kolawole gives rise to "a world of male heroism" (*Womanism* 93). Based on this, Grace Eche Okereke in "Gender Disparity in Socio-Economic Empowerment in Selected Novels of Chinua Achebe and Buchi Emecheta" states that "the place of the woman academic in this set-up is to expose the patriarchal lies that inflict psychic paralysis on the woman, …break the yokes of bondage, and liberate her into socio-economic power…" (188).

The emergence of African feminist literary criticism has brought attention to the issue of female marginalization and oppression, thus dispersing the notion that African literature is male centered. In view of the above, female African feminist critics and writers – Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie, Helen Chukwuma, Rose Acholonu, Flora Nwapa, Zaynab Alkali, Grace Okereke, Bessie

Head, Efua Sutherland, Mariama Ba, Buchi Emecheta, Ama Ata Aidoo and others— in all their literary writings have always tried to write back to the masculine centre in their post-colonial discourse. Significantly, some female novelists have depicted the lives of girls threatened by violence emanating from cultural practices and activities in different societies. In Emecheta's *The Slave Girl* and *The Bride Price*, Ojebeta and Aku-nna are physically and emotionally abused through cultural practices of 'isi muo' (bride abduction); Firdaus in Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero* is sexually molested and a victim of forced marriage; Zilayefa in Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow* experiences psychological and sexual violence in the wake of oil exploration; Kambili in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* is entangled in a web of domestic violence and so on. These girls as depicted by the individual writers are physically abused and psychologically weakened by different forms of violence. Thus the African feminist novelists have been grappling with this issue of violence which has endangered the lives of the female gender for different reasons; yet the problem continues unabated. Hence, one can compare gender-based violence to a deadly monster which has many tentacles to grab or inflict pain on any human being depending on the social conditions surrounding the individual.

Buchi Emecheta, Yvonne Vera, Nuruddin Farah and Ikechukwu Asika – the novelists selected for this study, saliently foreground the narrative of gender-based violence from the perspective of the girl-child. Emecheta in *The Bride Price* (1976) portrays childhood image of the girl-child as an oppressed individual in society. Vera's *Under the Tongue* (1996) subtly deals with the theme of incest and sexual abuse. In *From a Crooked Rib* (1970), Farah deals with the problem of female subjugation and commodification in Somalia; while Asika's *Tamara* (2013) thematically explores the issues of domestic violence and female trafficking. Specifically, the above selected novels examine the identity struggles of the girl protagonists, as well as the images of oppression

and subjugation. This is achieved by presenting conditions where the physical and psychic locations of experiences are situated in different African contexts. These four African novels— two by female writers and two by male writers— are the focus of this study.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study is to investigate the representations of different aspects of gender-based violence on the girl-child as well as the influence and consequences on her in Buchi Emecheta's *The Bride Price*, Yvonne Vera's *Under the Tongue*, Nuruddin Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* and Ikechukwu Asika's *Tamara*. The study also investigates how violent childhood experiences inhibit the physical, emotional and psychological growth of the girl-child by causing mental disturbances such as fear, anxiety, depression and neurosis. The study further investigates the different dimensions of the theme of violence leading to the violation of the girl-child's rights; it also examines the different aspects of style used by the selected novelists in depicting the experiences of girls in different African cultural milieu as explored in the selected novels.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Examine how the girl characters are exposed to different forms of gender based violence.

2. Investigate and analyze the various ways the childhood experiences of the female characters have been undermined and subverted in the selected novels.

3. Identify and analyse aspects of style as used by the novelists to explore violence against the girl-child in the selected novels.

4. Attempt a comparative study of the differences between the female and male novelists' representations of violence against the girl-child in their respective novels.

Significance of the Study

This research will help the readers to understand various ways the girl-child has been humiliated, exploited, subjugated, marginalized and neglected in society. The study is significant because it highlights how the selected novelists have depicted different forms of gender-based violence and the extent to which the female characters and people around them are affected in the four selected novels. This study also analyzes gender-based violence on the girl-child from the feminine and masculine points of view in order to further expose the dangers associated with these experiences. It will also be useful to students of literature, teachers and would-be writers since the study explores various skills and techniques employed by the selected writers in exploring girls' experiences.

This research will be significant to the general public as it will educate and explore the relationship between fictional works and the reality of human experiences. Furthermore, it will open new views on the selected novels as well as inspire other scholars to investigate other related themes in the novels. The major significance of this study is to enrich scholarship in African literature in the area of gender and violence especially in relation to female children.

Scope of the Study

This research analyzes four novels written by African novelists: Buchi Emecheta and Yvonne Vera who are female writers from Nigeria and Zimbabwe; Nuruddin Farah and Ikechukwu Asika who are male writers from Somalia and Nigeria. These novelists are selected to create a geographical spread which buttresses the fact that the girl-child's experiences are similar despite national, cultural, religious, political and economic diversity. The four novels selected for this study are: Buchi Emecheta's *The Bride Price* (1976) and Yvonne Vera's *Under the Tongue* (1996), Nuruddin Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* (1970) and Ikechukwu Asika's *Tamara* (2013).

Methodology of the Study

This work is a library-based research. It employs the use of primary sources which are the selected novels; other secondary sources such as critical works, textbooks, articles in journals and resources from the internet. The study adopts feminism and psychoanalysis as the theoretical frameworks.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED SCHOLARSHIP

This chapter explicates the concepts and theories used to explore the topic on violence and the girl-child in the selected novels. The theories direct us to examine the psychological or traumatic impact of the violation of the girl-child's rights in different African contexts. This chapter also reviews works of different scholars to ascertain the areas that have not been effectively covered in order to fill in the gaps. This chapter focuses on the following sub-headings:

i. Conceptual Studies

ii. Theoretical framework

iii. Empirical studies

Conceptual Studies

This involves defining and reviewing the focus of this research which centers on the "Girl-Child" and "Human Rights" as analytical tools for gender-based violence in literature.

The Girl-Child

A girl-child is a female child between infancy and early adulthood. The National Child Welfare Policy (1989) defines the girl-child as "a female below 14 years of age" (qtd. in Ada 48). Grace Offorma gives a broader definition by describing the girl-child as a biological female offspring from birth to eighteen (18) years of age" (1). Lazarus M. Tyoakaa, John I. A. and Apine Nor also define the girl-child as a "young female person who would eventually grow into a woman and marry" (1). Tyoakaa, Amaka and Nor go further to give a clearer insight by categorizing the girl-child's period of development into – infancy, childhood, early and late adolescence stages" (1).

From childhood, the girl-child is confronted with so many challenges. Before her birth, she is already a victim of a society regulated by cultural norms and traditional values. This general stereotypical perception of the girl-child is indeed very discouraging. In most parts of Africa, "only one's enemies will go out of their way to pray for a pregnant woman to have a girl-child. Most people want a man-child" (Emecheta, "Feminism with a Small f" 556). When a baby girl is born, people react in an awkward manner that gives the impression that the girl-child worthless and insignificant with little value attached to her existence. Emecheta clearly captures the culturally imposed stereotype on the girl-child in the prayers offered to a pregnant woman in most African communities – "you will be safely delivered of a bouncing baby boy, a real man-child that we can make jolly with whisky and beer" ("Feminism with a Small f" 556). Emecheta further observes that "the pregnant woman will not protest at this prayer because in her heart, she too would like to have a man-child, who will not be married away, but will stay in the family home and look after his mother when she becomes weak and old" ("Feminism with a Small f" 556). The above prayer is based on patriarchal ideology which is "constructed on the values and ethics of traditional African culture" (Okereke "Gender Literacy" 119).

"Patriarchal ideology in privileging the male over the female" (Okereke"Gender Literacy" 119) is indeed gender-based violence which results to girls and women "articulating their inferiority in the patriarchal cultural psyche" (Okereke "Gender Literacy" 120-121). In examining gender-based violence against the girl-child, Emecheta observes that:

> From childhood she is conditioned into thinking that being a girl she must do all the housework, she must help her mother to cook, clean, fetch water and look after her younger brothers and sisters. If she moans or shows signs of not wanting to do any of this, she will be sharply reminded by her mother. 'But you are a girl! Going to be a woman! ("Feminism with a Small f" 556)

Most African societies have prescribed sex-role stereotypes to keep the girl-child in check. Within her cultural milieu, she is seen as an incomplete and inferior human being who must be silent, patient, gentle and accommodating at all times. According to Chidinma Daniel-Inim,

> The male child is taught to aspire for great professionalism, the female child is indoctrinated with the idea that she could never survive outside the kitchen. At home, she is made to do most of the household chores while the boy plays ball in the field. Decisions that bother (sic) on her happiness are considered only after the boy's comfort. (224)

Culturally, the girl-child is trained to be docile, while the boy is trained to be defiant and proud. A girl's life is thus influenced by her society's cultural and traditional sex-role mentality. Okereke observes that "the traditional society was functionally geared towards preparing the different sexes for their different roles in society. It was all part of the socialization process which inculcated feminine qualities of gentleness, morality, hard work into women designed to make them good daughters, wives, mothers, housekeepers and farm hands" ("Education as a Colonial…" 131).

Okereke's comment reiterates Daniel-Inim's view that the society is responsible for exposing the girl-child to social constructions which influence her sex-roles from early childhood. Therefore, from childhood to adulthood, she is constantly reminded of her duties and lack of right to property possession. She is "denied property because she is unfortunate to be born a girl" (Chiluwa 111). Sophia Ogwude therefore asserts that "patriarchy and traditional inheritance laws have combined to consign the female child to a life of economic dependency as well as a life of servitude in marriage relationships" (173).

As a result, the girl-child becomes subservient and is degraded to the detriment of her happiness. This "gender apartheid places the girl-child in a disadvantaged position, where her potentials are

suppressed and self-actualization is not achieved. She therefore, becomes a victim of a pre-existing socio-cultural male chauvinism" (Tyoakaa, Amaka and Nor 1).

There are culturally instituted norms or behaviours that cause gender stereotypes and discrimination. Traditionally, boys are told to avoid all feminine roles, activities and behaviours that would attribute weakness to them. This kind of orientation amounts to gender discrimination against the girl-child. Based on this, Emmanuel Ibezim defines gender discrimination as:

> Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women irrespective of their marital status, on the basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. (166)

In most African societies, certain limitations exist which have become major issues of concern. The position and role assigned to the girl-child by virtue of her cultural norms bring multiple oppressions which include inequalities, discrimination and stereotyping. These multiple oppressions have been operational in the society for a long time and have also manifested in different forms – " rape, female genital mutilation (circumcision), domestic violence, forced prostitution, denial of inheritance and property rights, forced marriage, sexual abuse and bride abduction" (Albert 48). Albert maintains that "societal problems and cultural situations provide cheap excuses for girls to be raped" in most countries in Africa (2). In some cases, patriarchal superiority surfaces in the "cultural explanation for the practice of female circumcision, most especially excision and infibulation to curb sexual promiscuity by reducing the pleasures in sexual intercourse" (Albert 10).

In Nigeria as well as other parts of Africa, many situations have resulted to the unfair treatment of the girl-child with regards to education and overall treatment. Judith Van Allen "identifies traditional and European values as the reason for this discrimination against" the girl-child (qtd

in Okereke, “Education as a Colonial…” 132). Okereke observes that “colonial education discriminated against girls who were needed at home for farm work and domestic chores” (“Education as a Colonial…” 132). Davies supports Okereke’s assertion by maintaining that “the selection of males for formal education was fostered by the colonial institutions which made specific choices in educating male and female” (2). “Girls were taught different subjects from boys. While boys were exposed to all fields – sciences, social sciences, arts – girls were taught subjects like domestic science, the Bible – that helped to improve their roles as wives, mothers and housekeepers” (Okereke “Education as a Colonial…” 132). Okereke asserts that “this deficiency in girls’ education has put them at a disadvantage in all spheres of public life – political, social and economic – in modern Nigeria” (“Education as a Colonial…”132).

Carole Boyce Davies further observes that “the colonial administrations were willing accomplices because they imported a view of the world in which girls and women were of secondary importance…. European colonialism, as well as traditional attitudes of and to women, combined to exclude African girls and women from the educational processes which prepare one for the craft of writing” (2). These deprivations are responsible for the late entrance of the female gender into the literary scene.

Economic factors, religious beliefs and cultural norms with patriarchal ideologies are responsible for the unfair treatment of the girl-child. As a result of very bad economic conditions or scarce resources (poverty), the girl-child is forced to stay at home. According to Kolawole, poverty means relegating her education as a girl to elevate her brother” (“Feminine Preoccupations” 122).

Andrew Omede and Grace E. Agahiu in "The Implications of Girl-Child Education to Nation Building in the 21st Century in Nigeria" assert that:

> Due to poverty, girls get withdrawn from schools so as to help to supplement family income through hawking, trading or even working on the farm so as to support the family. In some cases, the girls are given out as house helps or even sent into early marriage because of a huge bride price. (3)

The socio-cultural and religious implication is that the education of the girl-child is not as important as the boy-child because she is seen as a property to be married off while the boy continues with the family's name. Davies in "Introduction: Feminist Consciousness and African Literary Criticism" notes that,

> The sex role distinctions common to many African societies supported the notion that western education was a barrier to a woman's role as wife and mother and an impediment to her success in these traditional modes of acquiring status. With few exceptions, girls were kept away from formal and especially higher education. (2)

Omede and Agahiu observe that this form of "gender inequality is promoted by religion and custom" (1). According to them, "young girls particularly in Northern Nigeria are denied the benefit of education. This has given consequences for both the individual and the society at large" (Omede and Agahiu 1). Considering the discussions on gender-based violence, Chidinma Daniel-Inim maintains that the patriarchal system is to be blamed for the oppression of the female gender because "the man wields the power and the authority that organizes the social structure. He is the authorizing force behind the social, political, economic and religious decisions in the society. Thus, while the man from childhood is indoctrinated with a superiority complex, the woman is treated as inferior to the man" (224).

In reality, women in traditional African society "occupy the lowest rung of the power ladder with their daughters" (Okereke, "Gender Literacy…" 20). In the fictional world, this "inferiorisation of the female gender is also based on the erroneous essential idea that biological difference

between men and women defines them as two separate parallel entities with the male being naturally superior and the female naturally inferior" (Okereke " Gender Literacy" 120).

In view of the above, Grace E. Okereke in "Gender Disparity in Socio-Economic Empowerment in Selected Novels of Chinua Achebe and Buchi Emecheta", observes that "patriarchal society equips men with resources for socioeconomic empowerment against women" and girl-children which have been "transposed from life into literature" (179). This has reflected in the literary productions of some African novelists like Chinua Achebe, T.M Aluko, Onuora Nzekwu, Buchi Emecheta, Cyprain Ekwensi, Elechi Amadi Nuruddin Farah, Ama Ata Aidoo, Mariama Ba and others. Rose Acholonu notes that "this dishonourable image of the female is a marked feature of both the Nigerian oral and written literary traditions" ("The Female Predicament…" 38).

According to Acholonu, "the male dominance over the female, which results in the inferiorised image of the female characters in our literatures is what she refers to as – the female predicament" ("The Female Predicament…" 38). To confirm this predicament, Acholonu stresses that the "female position or status, very often, is no better than that of a slave" ("The Female Predicament…" 38). This 'slave image' is what some African writers have tried to expose in their novels by depicting some patriarchal ideologies and cultural anachronisms that militate against the self-worth, growth, development and rights of the girl-child.

Chimamanda Adichie blames African cultural mentality in her book, *We Should All be Feminists,* for promoting gender-based violence. According to Adichie,

> …. We do a much greater disservice to girls, because we raise them to cater to the fragile egos of males. We teach girls to shrink themselves, to make themselves smaller. We say to girls, 'You can have ambition, but not too much'. You should aim to be successful but not too successful, otherwise you will threaten the man. (*We Should All be Feminists* 19-20)

In a bid to correct the mentality of the girl-child based on the inferior status conferred on her, Adichie suggests that every girl's focus should be strongly hinged on the belief of feminist premise— "A fair world. A world of happier men and happier women" (*We Should All be Feminists* 17). To keep the girl-child physically and mentally emancipated, Adichie in *Dear Ijeawele, or A Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions* encourages her friend, Ijeawele to use instructive words on her daughter, Chizalum to fault the patriarchally-instituted gender roles. Adichie cautions her friend: "Please see Chizalum as an individual. Not as a girl who should be a certain way. See her weaknesses and her strengths in an individual way. Do not measure her on a scale of what a girl should be. Measure her on a scale of being the best version of herself" (*Dear Ijeawele* 15). Adichie further reveals that,

> Gender roles are so deeply conditioned in us that we will often follow them even when they chafe against our true desires, our needs, our happiness. They are very difficult to unlearn, and so it is important to try to make sure that Chizalum rejects them from the beginning. Instead of letting her internalize the idea of gender roles, teach her self-reliance. Tell her that it is important to be able to do so for herself and fend for herself. (*Dear Ijeawele* 16)

Chizalum is the portrait of the girl-child in African society who must be liberated at all costs. The above statements show that gender roles run deep in most African cultural milieux and have prescribed roles for both male and female genders. This explains why Adichie encourages Ijeawele to teach the girl-child (Chizalum) self-reliance and the importance of education for growth and development.

Despite the efforts by writers to erase different forms of gender-based violence against the girl-child in society, there is still need to confront and raise new consciousness on the current realities that stare us in the face. One thing is clear, the society is not truly liberated because marriages are imposed on girl-children, girls are abducted and raped, stereotypes and discrimination still exist

in terms of educational and cultural opportunities. This points to one thing – the violation of human rights. It is therefore worrisome that female oppression and subjugation debase girls' value and self-worth. If this is not handled, it would lead to psychic fragmentation or more violence both in the family circle and the society at large.

Human Rights

The rate of the violation of the girl-child's rights is increasingly worrisome. Girls face different forms of violence daily. This affects them physically and emotionally by thwarting their dreams, limiting their growth and leaving them disillusioned or mentally unstable. Thus, the thematic focus of this conceptual study hinges on the violation of the girl-child's rights which manifests in the form of stereotyping, discrimination, rape, human trafficking, forced marriage and abduction. Significantly, this study is informed by the human rights challenges the girl-child is facing in different African cultural milieux. These challenges are indeed enormous and diverse in nature. Therefore, the concept of human rights deserves a closer examination to expose the ugly picture of violation of the girl-child's rights in literature.

Generally speaking, human rights are basic rights given to all human beings irrespective of their origin, gender, religion, class, race or colour. This view is affairmed by R. Beitz's definition of human rights as "inalienable fundamental rights to which an individual is inherently entitled because he or she is a human being" (17). Samuel Moyn further asserts that "in an age of human rights, everyone can become a king, at least on paper or in court, where claims that basic human dignity is non-negotiable" (*Human Rights and the Uses of History* 56). In Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na`im's view, "human rights violations are due to human action or inaction which occurs because individual persons act or fail to act in certain ways" (62). An-Na`im further explains that

“these violations are caused by a wide and complex variety of factors and forces, including economic conditions, structural social factors, and political expediency” (62). Hence, gender-based violence as an act of violence against the female gender offends the conscience of humanity.

The violation of human rights, especially the female gender is indeed a serious problem. Violence is directed against the female gender because she is a girl or woman. Such violence is perpetrated through harmful social and cultural expectation concerning gender roles associated by being a woman or girl. Thus, violence which manifests in the form of discrimination functions as a mechanism for enforcing inequality. In view of the above, Andrew Clapham states that “invoking our human rights has become a way to challenge laws that we feel are unjust (even when the law has been adopted according to the correct procedures)” (48). It is important to stress that literary artists and other NGOs are at the forefront in agitating against the violation of the rights of the girl-child. The agitation is characteristically geared towards enlightening the public on various violent acts that impinge on the growth and development of the girl-child. It is therefore this sense of common “humanity and shared suffering that keeps the world of human rights moving and explains the gesture of protest against a violation of human rights” (Clapham 51).

Basically, the respect of human rights is a yardstick for measuring the way people treat their fellow human beings. Inessence, these rights are inherent to all humans in order to articulate the need for justice, mutual respect, sanctity for human life and tolerance. It is however unfortunate that many cultural milieux have denigrated the image of the female gender. This denigration has led to cultural discrimination, stereotyping, inequality, oppression and subjugation of both girls and women. As a result, their fundamental human rights are constantly denied. The above-

mentioned conditions of the female gender indeed demand a quick action that will restore their dignity, self-worth and self-actualization in society. To support the above assertion, Clapham categorically states that,

> Human rights are important as instruments for change in the world. Today, not only are human rights claims instrumental in changing national law, but human rights principles have become relevant to designing international development assistance projects, evaluating lending condition and project designs of international financial institutions, facilitating transitions from communist to market economies, rebuilding war-torn societies, and combating poverty. Human rights were invoked and claimed in the contexts of anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism, anti-slavery, anti-apartheid, anti-racism, and feminist and indigenous struggles everywhere. (50)

Significantly, in every society, "human rights are universal rights that are applicable anywhere" in the world (Donnelly 20). This is to say that all human rights are universal and inalienable, equal and non-discriminatory; in essence, they are guaranteed by law in the forms of "treaties, customary international law and general principles" (Deobbler 26). Therefore, everyone irrespective of his or her origin is entitled to the universal human rights as contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Such rights are: "right to life, freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom of movement, right for protection, freedom of thoughts, right to gender identity, right to sexual orientation and right to communicate" (Donnelly 17).

The history of human rights is hinged on the philosophical belief in the sanctity of human life as perceived in different cultural milieux. According to Donnelly, "most ancient cities, traditional societies typically had elaborate system of duties, conceptions of justice, political legitimacy, and human flourishing that sought to realize human dignity, flourishing or well-being entirely independent of human rights" (12). These traditional societies in different ways have "infringed on the human rights of citizens in ways that threatened their existence and survival. This leads to the idea of revolution which canvasses for freedom and social equality" (Moyn 6). The agitation

for human rights thus gave birth to certain declarations and documentations such as Magna Carta (1212), The Petition of Rights (1628), the US Constitution (1787), French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizens (1789), the US Bill of Rights (1719), United Nation Charter (1945), and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Since human rights are "universal, non-discriminatory and inalienable" (Donnelly 20), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) summarizes all constitutions by "appealing to all societies to give justice to the oppressed and freedom to the enslaved" (Donnelly 20).

Every individual is entitled to human rights which are based on the system of welfare and justice obtainable in a given society. The origin of human rights is traced to some traditions and documents that existed in different societies. In England, the violation of ancient laws by King John in the 13th century England led to the signing of Magna Carta (1215) ("History of Human Rights" www.lincoln.edu).. Magna Carta is a document asserting individual human "rights of the English people" (Stenton 1). These rights according to the document are: "right to own property, freedom of heavy taxation, laws prohibiting bribery and misconduct, equality before the law and freedom from governmental interference on churches" ("History of Human Rights" www.lincoln.edu).

The problem of human rights is a major concern in 17th century England. The quest for the protection of citizen's rights – "freedom of religious beliefs and right to political participation against an oppressive leadership system is also one of the most important achievements of the English Revolution of 1640" (Guizot vii). During this revolution, the King is executed and Oliver Cromwell who is the rebel leader becomes the head of government. The same issue of human "rights propel the resistance against the government or civil administration" in the 1688 Revolution which resulted to the 'English Bill of Rights' (Guizot xvii). The Bill of Rights

subjects the king to the rule of law just like other citizens, protects some basic human rights to justice and fair trial, and recognizes the power of the citizens to "elect Parliament that would control the country's resources and property" (Guizot 22). It is significant to note that the Bill of Rights is a reflection of human rights promises made by King John in Magna Carta. However, it is noted that this Declaration which is made under duress in the Carta does not benefit the ordinary citizens but the nobility. The Bill of Rights is also known to have encouraged the Protestant religion in order not to endanger the sovereignty of England under the leadership of a Catholic King ("History of Human Rights" www.lincoln.edu).

In other parts of the world, people are mobilized to agitate for human rights by protesting for leaders to rule justly by limiting the control they have over citizens' lives, property, and activities. Examples of documents asserting such rights are: the English Bill of Rights (1689), the French Declaration on the Rights of Man and Citizen (1789), and the US Constitution and Bills Rights (1791). All the above documents are precursors to contemporary human rights. In the area of religion, "major religions such as Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Taoism and Judaism also seek for moral rules of law that would improve the dignity of human lives, the duties of man to God and other human beings" ("History of Human Rights" www.lincoln.edu).

Significantly, the 17th and 18th centuries in Europe have witnessed agitations from philosophers for the adoption of 'natural rights'— "the rights of an individual as a human being and not merely as a citizen of a given society, member of a cultural group or religion. This concept of natural rights originates from John Locke's literary productions in the 17th century" (Freeman 70). John Locke's concept thus defines natural rights as "rights to life, liberty and estate property" (50). The above definition further shows that human rights are "theoretically based on the dignity of individuals" (Thomas 51). United Nations summarizes the above views on human

rights by maintaining that “the inherent dignity of equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the basis for the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world” (*Universal Declaration of Human Rights* 1). In essence, the denial of fundamental human rights leads to violence which is a violation of moral and basic rights.

Gender-based violence constitutes the violation of the rights of the girl-child. In African literature, writers like Buchi Emecheta, Yvonne Vera, Zaynab Alkali, Mariama Ba, Nuruddin Farah, Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo, Chika Unigwe, Ikechukwu Asika, Amma Darko, Kaine Agary and others have explored the issue of gender-based violence in their literary texts. In their novels, the girl characters are oppressed, stereotyped, sexually abused and subjugated. Notably, the novelists have treated the issue of gender-based violence differently in order to expose the violation of human rights. In essence, human rights violation occurs when an individual or a group of individuals abuse or deny the girl-child her basic rights. In fact, the culture of discrimination against the girl-child in most African societies allows violence to occur on a daily basis without bringing the perpetrators to justice. As a result, feminist novelists in their respective novels depict girls’ violent experiences to create awareness on the bizarre and complex nature of their experiences in order to help them regain their dignity and equality in a male-oriented world.

In conclusion, I have attempted here to define the concept of human rights as rights which are inherent in all humans. The theory and concept of human rights appeal to the sense of reason, justice, equity and fairness. The above views are applied in the examination of the violation of human rights in the selected novels. Through the concept of human rights, the researcher exposes how the female characters are affected by violence in their respective cultural milieux. Thus, injustice, oppression, and discrimination are condemned as acts of violence.Therefore, since

violence against the female gender is a violation of human rights that cannot be justified by any claim, this research moves towards adopting theories to explore and interpret violent experiences.

Theoretical Framework

Critics have employed different theoretical frameworks to examine the issues of human rights violation, female subjugation and oppression in fictional works. Scholars, especially feminist critics, have been passionate in explicating or criticizing the peculiar nature of female experience and portrayals in literature. Hence, they explore literary texts from cultural, social, economic and political perspectives to expose the reality and complexity of female experiences. The theoretical framework on which this study analyses female experience in the selected novels is “feminism”. Psychoanalysis is also adopted to examine the psychological impact of violence on the girl-child.

Feminism

Feminist theory is an extension of feminism into theoretical or philosophical fields. It encompasses work in different of disciplines such as anthropology, psychology, health, sociology, economics, women’s studies, literary criticism, art, history and philosophy. It is important to note that whatever definitions or variations that may exist in feminism as a movement or ideology, all of them point to the fact that it advocates for women’s right while emphasizing the “social, political, cultural and economic equality of men and women” (Beasely 12). Thus, feminism seeks to define, establish and defend rights and opportunities for the female gender in society.

Critics, feminists and scholars have given different definitions of feminism. The definitions are indeed very complex, and thus vary according to geographical environment, cultural values,

religion, continents, nations and individual perceptions. The term, feminism is defined by Aileen S. Kraditor as "the theory that women should have political, economic and social rights equal to those of men" (qtd. in Okereke "Issues in Western…" 8). Judith M. Bardwick goes further to define feminism as an "explicit rejection of the lifestyles created by strongly coercive norms that define and restrict what women are and can do" (qtd. in Okereke "Issues in Western…" 8).

Molara Ogundipe-Leslie in "Stiwanism: Feminism in an African Context" observes that "feminism can be defined by its etymological roots" (547). According to Ogundipe-Leslie, "Femina is "woman" in Latin. Feminism, an ideology of woman; any body of social philosophy about women" ("Stiwanism" 547). The above definition as observed by Ogundipe-Leslie "gives us enough leeway to encompass various types of feminisms: right-wing, left-wing, centrist, left of center, right of center, reformist, separatist, liberal, socialist, Marxist, non-aligned, Islamic, indigenous, etc" ("Stiwanism" 547). To Lisa Tuttle, feminism refers to "everyone who is aware of and seeking to end women's subjugation in any way and for any reason" (107). Maggie Humm supports Tuttle's opinion and asserts that "feminism stands for a belief in sexual equality combined with a commitment to eradicate sexist domination and transform society" (*Feminist Criticism* 1).

Okereke notes that "feminism expresses self-preservative consciousness and its major agenda is to deconstruct patriarchy by reconstructing human consciousness, towards polyphonic wholeness, towards an appreciation of the multiple attributes and uniqueness of every human being irrespective of biological sex" ("Gender Literacy" 122). Helen Chukwuma also asserts that feminism cannot therefore be " perceived as a disorder, a deviation or extremism but should rather be an assertive cry of an unacknowledged human being who rejects the inferior slot to

which she has been circumscribed" ("Identity of Self" ix). Chukwuma further stresses that feminism "means a rejection of inferiority and a striving for recognition. It seeks to give the woman a sense of self as a worthy, effectual and contributing human being" ("Identity of Self" ix).

Okereke therefore submits that "feminism expresses women's struggle for liberation from male domination and patriarchal oppression in society" ("The Impact of Feminism…" 162). According to Okereke, "the central concern of feminism is women – their lives, their lot, their experiences, their rights, their past, present and future" ("The Impact of Feminism…" 162).

Feminism has different definitions and perspectives all over the world. It is a theoretical structure that presents convictions about the conditions of the female gender and the reasons for their mistreatment and gender imbalance. Feminism as a theory has generated a lot of controversies and criticisms in Europe, Africa and the world at large. The term, feminism, can be used to describe a "political, cultural or economic movement aimed at establishing equal rights and legal protection for women" (Hawksworth 26). Hence, it employs political, sociological, psychological theories and philosophies concerned with the issues of gender difference in order to advocate for "gender equality, women's rights and interests" (Hooks 15). In essence, it involves philosophies concerned with the issues of gender difference. Marilyn French explains that:

> Feminism is the only serious, coherent, and universal philosophy that offers an alternative to patriarchal thinking and structures…. Feminists believe that women are human beings, that the two sexes are equal in all significant ways and that this equality must be publicly recognized. (7)

On her own part, Carole B. Davies cites Filomena Steady's definition thus: "True feminism is an abnegation of male protection and a determination to be resourceful and reliant" ("Introduction: Feminist…" 7).

Feminism thus seeks to highlight and fight oppression against the feminine gender. As a theory and movement, it empowers women everywhere; it also presents convictions about the conditions of women and girls in different societies and the reasons for their continuous oppression and subjugation.

The inaccurate opinion about women is traced back to western patriarchal society, which perceived women as the weaker gender; not equal to men as a result of their gender qualities. Great western philosophers, writers and psychologists like Aristotle, Sigmund Freud, Charles Darwin, Thomas Aquinas and others belong to this group. However, Virgina Woolf, Mary Wollstonecraft, Kate Millett, Elaine Showalter, Simone de Beauvoir and others refute the incorrect assumption about women through this critical theory and movement called feminism. Mary Wollstonecraft's book, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* published in 1992 stipulates that men and women have equal rights. In the book, Wollstonecraft challenges women's oppression while urging them to press for liberation. Wollstonecraft's view as quoted by Ann Dobie expresses the deep meaning of feminism. She states:

> I wish to persuade women to endeavour to acquire strength both of mind and body, and to convince them that the soft phrase, susceptibility of heart, delicacy of sentiments, and refinement of taste, are also synonymous with epithets of weakness, and that those beings who are only objects of pity and that kind of love, which has been termed its sister, will soon become objects of contempt…. I wish to show that elegance is inferior to virtue that the first object of laudable ambition is to obtain a character as a human being, regardless of the distinction of sex. (104)

The above positive declaration asserts women's worth and therefore sustains the emergence of feminism as well as its ideological principles. The same assertion is found in Virginia Woolf's *A*

Room of One's Own written in 2005. The relationship between the male and female gender has taken an interesting turn since Mary Wollstonecraft published her book, A *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1992) in which she discussed about the absolute power of men. This exciting turn is seen on both the political and literary field of activities. On the political front, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Stanton in the first Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York (1848) impel that the American constitution be amended for equality between men and women (Nnolim *Issues*… 219). Since then, feminism and liberation movement have continued to gain grounds. In essence, "feminist movement, politics and ideology" blend to fight for the rights of the female gender both at local and international levels (Botting and Houser 268).

In Europe and America, all shades of feminists exist to confront men. The **Suffragettes** such as Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Staton, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, Harriet Mills, and Abigail Duniway are women who dedicated themselves in the fight for women to vote which led to the women's suffrage in Britain (1918) and in the U.S (1920) (Turtle 184). The feminists, Alice Paul, Elizabeth Boyer, and Judith Hole belong to a group called **Women Liberationists**. These feminists are recognized because they fought for total liberation for every woman in matters of love, sexual freedom, and equality in jobs. **Socialist feminists** such as Kate O'Hare, Emma Goldman and Christine Obbo are feminists who urged women to liberate themselves from motherhood through using birth control. In essence, they fought for sexual liberation (Nnolim *Issues*… 219). **Liberalist Feminists**: Mary Ritter Beard, Julia Lathrop and Shana Alexander are mainly concerned about women's right which must be obtained through legal efforts. **Marxist Feminists** such as Simone de Beauvoir, Kate Millett, and Michelle Barrett accuse capitalism for the inferior status and low income occupational jobs of women. The above categorizations are summarized in the writings of European theorists, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin (*A Vindication*

of the Rights of Woman), Simone de Beauvoir (*The Second Sex*), Germaine Greer (*The Female Eunuch*), Betty Friedan (*The Feminine Mystique*), and Kate Millett (*Sexual Politics*) (Nnolim *Issues*… 219).

With the views enumerated above, people believe that feminists are only women or female writers, but this claim is false because women and men are free to agitate, write or speak in favour of the female gender as seen in Nuruddin Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* (1970) and Ikechukwu Asika's *Tamara* (2013). To further support the above view, Simone de Beauvoir as quoted in Toril Moi's *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* writes that feminists are "women-or men too-who are fighting to change women's condition, in association with the class struggle but independently of it as well, without making the changes they strive for totally dependent on changing society as a whole" (9).

Christian Ekwunife observes that "from the ongoing assertions, it will not be out of place if we say that feminism is a philosophy that fights or preaches against dehumanization and the deplorable state of the female gender" (430). However, feminism, as a critical theory cannot be summed up in one definition, because "it has not yet been codified into a single critical perspective" (Dobie 102). Charles. E Bressler also supports the above idea by emphasizing that "feminist theory and practice appear to be a diffused, loosely connected body of criticism that is more divided than unified, housing more internal disagreement than unity among its adherents" (188).

Western feminism has influenced and changed dominant perspectives both in Africa and other parts of the world. Generally, Western feminist activists have campaigned for women's legal rights (rights of contract, property rights, voting rights), for women's right for integrity, abortion, decisions on sexual or reproductive matters such as access to contraception and quality prenatal

care, protection of women and girls from domestic violence, protection from sexual harassment and rape "for workplace rights, including maternity leave and equal pay; against misogyny; and against other forms of gender-specific discrimination against women" (Hawksworth 26).

African feminists have also adopted different forms of African feminist ideologies to define their struggles and oppression within the African context. Thus, feminism has varying definitions, forms and types which are based on religious, social, racial and political factors. Multicultural forms of feminism such as "black feminism and Intersectional feminism" are some examples (Weedon 23).

Feminists and scholars have divided the movement's history into three "waves". The first wave refers mainly to "women's suffrage movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is mainly concerned about women's right to vote" (Nicholson 51). According to Raman Selden and Peter Widdowson, "the Women's Rights and Women's Suffrage movements were the crucial determinants in shaping this phase, with their emphasis on social, political and economic reform…" (*A Reader's Guide*… 206). The second wave refers to the ideas and actions associated with the women's liberation movement beginning in the 1960s (which campaigned for legal and social rights for women). Selden and Widdowson observe that:

> One, perhaps the over-simplifying, way of identifying the beginnings of the 'second wave' is to record the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963, which , in its revelation of the frustrations of the white, heterosexual, middle-class American women – careerless and trapped in domesticity – put feminism on the national agenda, substantively and for the first time. (211)

The third wave refers to a "continuation of, and a reaction to the perceived failures of second-wave feminism, beginning in the 1990s" (Humm, *The Dictionary*… 251). The above definition incorporates different types of feminism such as Radical feminism, Liberal feminism, Socialist

feminism, Marxist feminism, Right-wing, Left-wing, Centrist, Separatist, Non-aligned and Islamic feminisms etc.

With the points stipulated above, we come to the next phase: feminism in the African literary scene. The third wave feminism is a model which gave birth to African feminism. It provides platforms for other forms of feminism in order to refocus women's attention to the diverse and distinct nature of their humiliating experiences. The history of feminism in Africa is traced to the "conscience groups" (Chukwuma "The Face of Eve" 105). Filomina Steady explains that African feminism incorporates "female autonomy and co-operation; an emphasis on nature over culture; the centrality of children, multiple mothering and kinship…" (qtd. in Davies and Graves 6). In line with Steady's view, Davies states that " African feminism examines African societies for institutions which are of value to women and rejects those which work to their detriment and does not simply import Western women's agenda" (9).

For over three decades now, African feminists have found self-assertion and self-writing very interesting and rewarding. They support the idea that feminist theory analyzes gender inequality, the social, the cultural, rather than the biological differences between male and female.

The feminist literary ideology in Africa is very complex and diverse. Charles Nnolim observes that the feminist house in African Literature is divided into feminists, womanists and accommodationists, reactionists and middle-of-the-roaders; and gynandrists (*Issues*… 217-218). Muhammed Alkali also gives his own classification of African feminism by identifying Womanism, Motherism, Stiwanism and Nego-feminism as exploring African women's struggles (32-34).

African feminists are grouped into critics and writers. Critics like Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie, Grace E. Okereke, Helen Chukwuma, Rose Acholonu, Chikwenye Ogunyemi and others are feminists who make public statements about feminist movement. This group is concerned with the discourse on female oppression and liberation, and they demand for total equality with men in all areas of private and public life. The second group refers to writers such as Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, Ama Ata Aidoo, Mariama Ba, Zaynab Alkali, Tess Onwueme and others who write feminist literary texts but are not directly involved in feminist movement in their public discussion.

For African feminists, African feminism gives room for alternative theories that focus on women's experiences and peculiarities. Womanism as one of the alternatives is a social theory based on every day experiences of black or African women in history. It also seeks to restore the balance between women and the environment (Phillips xx). Alice Walker in the short story, "Coming Apart" (1979) coined the term, Womanist (Phillips xix). Since Walker coined womanist, it has been used in interpreting varied concepts in feminism. Walker defines 'womanist' as "a black feminist or feminist of colour…who loves other women, sexually and/or asexually appreciates and prefers women's culture…sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or nonsexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not separatist…. Womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender" (xii).

The womanist view is seen as an offshoot of the feminist ideology which conveys the sufferings of the African woman both in the colonial and postcolonial contexts. Molly Chiluwa explains that "Womanism is a branch of the third wave feminism of the 1980s that emerged because of discontentment with the Western definition of feminism championed by scholars like Clenora

Hudson-Weems, Alice Walker, Molara Ogundipe-Leslie, Ogunyemi and others. The ideologies include Africana womanism, Stiwanism, Nego feminism and Black feminism" (103).

According to Mary Kolawole "the African woman is aware of womanism as the totality of her self-expression and self-realization in diverse ways. This involves eliciting women's positive qualities, ability, self-enhancement, self esteem and freedom" (*Womanism*… 27). Kolawole further observes that "any African woman who has the consciousness to situate the struggle within African cultural realities by working for a total and robust self-retrieval of the African woman is an African or an African womanist" (*Womanism*… 34). For African feminists, forms of women oppression are specific to different cultural milieus. In essence, the focus of feminist theories hinges on the reality of female experiences in different societies.

As a form of response to western feminism, Motherism also becomes an alternative to debunking a struggle which does not capture African women's experience. Catherine Acholonu quoted in Chiluwa therefore "valorizes motherhood, respect for nature and the environment as part of the female struggle for liberty" (103). Thus, motherism is adopted as a one of the roadmaps to defining the goals of the African women and their struggles. Motherhood is explored within the discourse of girlhood and cultural aspects of gender relations (Stratton 1995) which depicts what Anne Oakley (1994) refers to as male-stream literature.

Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo in contributing to this discourse has propounded the "Snail-Sense feminism" as a theory which encourages women to adopt discretion and diplomacy in pursuing self-assertion, actualization, empowerment and liberation from subjugation. Adimora-Ezeigbo maintains that different shades of feminism are summarized in one quest: the zeal to improve, empower and liberate women for self-actualization. The Snail-Sense feminism is based on the Igbo cultural worldview. In an interview with Chuks Oluigbo, Adimora-Ezeigbo explains that

her theory "is culture-based and cultured-centred" (www.AficanWriter.com). According to Adimora-Ezeigbo, it differs from "American or a European woman, or a Feminist in Islam, or a Feminist in Asia" (www.AficanWriter.com). Adimora-Ezeigbo accepts that womanism defines the oppressive experiences of the female gender but maintains that the Snail-sense Feminism would reflect more the lives of girls and women in African cultural societies. According to Adimora-Ezeigbo,

> This theory is based on the lifestyle and habit of the snail. Our society is highly patriarchal, and for a woman to survive here, she really has to be hardworking, resilient, tolerant, and accommodating. And that is the life of a snail. If you watch a snail, it moves over rocks, boulders and even thorns with that lubricating tongue that is never pierced or hurt by these jagged objects that it crosses over because it has learnt to lubricate its tongue to help it negotiate and crawl over sharp and rough edges. (www.AficanWriter.com)

African feminists have rejected the universalism of the female gender's experiences in order to adopt specific models that would define their oppression. In essence, they do not accept the generalization of the experiences of the female gender. As a form of this new model, Obioma Nnaemeka presents a new approach to women's struggle through negotiation and feminism. This she refers to as "Nego-feminism". Nego-feminism adopts complementarity, collaboration, and negotiation. As a theory, it shares Susan Arndt's ideology on 'cosmological dialect' (Arndt "Paradigms of Intertextuality…" 41). Obioma Nnaemeka observes that "for African women, feminism is an act that evokes the dynamism and shifts of a process as opposed to the stability and reification of a construct or framework…. Feminism is structured by cultural imperatives and modulated by ever-shifting local and global experiences" ("Nego Feminism" 378).

For Okereke, "African feminism is the gynecologocentric celebration of the African woman and her womanhood in its rich multi-dimensionality in resistance to the constricting impositions of

patriarchal society on the woman" ("African Feminist Dialogics…" 19). According to Okereke, "Gynecologocentrism" is a term for centering the female in discourse. It expresses the female equivalent of Derrida's term phallogocentrism. But unlike phallogocentrism which tends to be monologistic, gynecologocentrism is dialogic" ("Orality, Gender Vocality…" 72). Okereke further notes that "gynecologocentrism is the location of the female in her varied essences, in relation to Self and Others, at the center of discourse" ("Orality, Gender Vocality…" 73).

African feminists believe that the oppression of the female gender in Africa differs in many ways from the experiences of the Western women. They argue that oppressive experiences are distinct and peculiar to individuals in different cultural milieus. This underlying assumption centers on African philosophical views which impinge on the rights of girls and women. Therefore, the African feminist perspectives are perceived as models that would help the female gender to voice their limitations, oppression and marginalization. In essence, Western radicalism is rejected by African feminists in order to tackle cultural subjugation and heterosexuality as tools of patriarchal violence.

C. Dryden et al also point out that "Western feminism was repudiated by African feminists based on the negative media publicity which presents the female gender as men haters and homosexuals" (114). Gayatari Chakravorty Spivak therefore warns against this "form of negative assumption of equating feminism with men-hate ideology" (468). Susan Arndt writes that Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo also lends her voice to Spivak's warning when she states:

> I call myself a feminist. This does not mean that I hate men or that men are bad. It is just that the situation of women in society has to be changed…. I don't believe that confrontation as you (have it) in the western radical feminism will solve the problems of women. I believe in complementarity between men and women for the good of all. ("Paradigms of Intertextuality…" 41)

Recently, African women's struggle is smeared with radicalism. The struggle of the female gender against the oppression of patriarchal social settings is clear evidence that their agitation is submerged in radicalism which in a mild form could be termed 'resistance'. Hence, African feminists struggle to resist all forms of limitations, subjugation and violations of their human rights. Ogundipe-Leslie does not find anything wrong in naming African feminist ideology after white feminism. She sees African feminists' rejection as being "weak, mindless and attempting to curry favour from men…some who are genuinely concerned with ameliorating women's lives sometimes feel embarrassed to be described as feminists unless they are particularly strong in character" (*Re-Creating Ourselves*… 229).

Ogundipe-Leslie goes further to provide a terminology which she called 'STIWA', meaning "Social Transformation Including Women in Africa" (*Re-Creating Ourselves*…, 229-230). The term, 'STIWA' is coined as a new terminology to give credence to feminist debate over choice of terms. It is important to note that the debate on the term, 'feminism' is derived from the divergent assessment of the terminology and its relevance in African social settings. Since African philosophical worldview and women's struggles are different from Western ideological conceptions, Juliana Nfah-Abenyi believes that "there is no one unified post-colonial literature or theory, just as there is no one feminist theory but feminists theories that offer diverse and differing voices within feminisms" (261).

Some critics are of the view that women's struggles are universal, diversified and multicultural; hence, feminists should focus on their intertwined differences in order to achieve their goals. This is what Lucia Nagib, Chris Perriam and Rajinder Dudrah refer to as "interconnectedness of differences" (xxiii). Based on the discussion on interconnectedness, Chandra Mohanty observes that:

> …differences are never just differences. In knowing differences and particularities, we can better see the connections and commonalities…the challenge is to see how differences allow us explain border-crossing better and more accurately, how specifying differences allow us theorize universal concerns fully. It is this intellectual move that allows for my concern of different communities and identities to build coalitions and solidarities across borders. (505)

The concept of feminism is diverse and complex. Therefore, to summarize this discussion on feminism, it is vital to note that feminism is a broad movement that encompasses different phases of women's liberation and struggles. Hence, oppression, marginalization, sexual abuse, and cultural restrictions are major concerns of women in every cultural milieu. Feminism is liberation from all oppressive limitations that the female gender yearns to achieve. Ogundipe-Leslie further explains that "feminism is not a cry for any kind of sexual orientation and I am not homophobic heterosexist…. Feminism is not the reversal of gender roles ("Stiwanism" 545") …. Feminism is not penis envy or gender envy; wanting to be a man as they like to say to us, "well do you want to be a man? Or whatever you do you can't have a penis". Feminism is not necessarily oppositional to men…and is not opposed to African culture and heritage" ("Stiwanism" 545).

This research adopts different types of African feminism since most of the violent acts committed against the female gender in the selected novels are linked to male supremacy and patriarchy, sexual objectification and traditional gender roles in African cultural milieus. African feminism lays emphasis on the male gender's role in violence against the female gender as related to the issues of rape, domestic violence, sexual harassment and cultural restrictions. African feminism is a type of feminism that addresses the conditions of African women who live in their continents. It has different forms such as Motherism, Snail-Sense Feminism, Womanism, Nego-Feminism, Stiwanism etc. Since African women's experiences are diverse, these feminisms are used by different groups to define their struggles (Nkealah 61).

African feminism is a feminist philosophy that raises arguments which validate the experiences of African women and African society against mainstream feminist discourse. Hence, female experience takes on a positive affirmation and the feminist view flourishes while expressing a unique female consciousness and a feminine tradition in literature. It also celebrates an intuitive female approach in the interpretation of girl-child's experiences. As a result, feminism has gradually become more subtle in its attacks on male-dominated society.

Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis is a therapy as well as a "theory of the human mind" (Eagleton 137). The term, psychoanalysis is perceived as a "set of theories and therapeutic techniques related to the study of the unconscious mind which forms a method of treatment for mental-health disorders" (Gill 1). Hence, it is commonly used in treating depression and anxiety disorders. In essence, psychoanalysis refers both to a theory of how the mind works and a treatment modality. This field of study was established in the early 1890s by the Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud. The term, psychoanalysis was "first used in Freud's work, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899) which was formally written in French with the title, *Die Traum deu tung*" (1896) (Gay 3-4). The main concepts of psychoanalysis as developed by Freud are: "trauma, repression, the unconscious, the sexual and death drives, the ego and unconscious fantasy" (Fromm 12-13).

Psychological criticism explores the work of literature basically as a "manifestation of the fictional world or indirectly, the state of mind and the structure of personality of the individual author" (Abrams & Harpham 319-20). There are some post-Freudian psychoanalytic developments; thus, Psychoanalysis was further developed by students of Freud and others such as Alfred Adler, Carl Gustav Jung, Anna Freud, Didier Anzieu, Jacques Lacan, Jean Laplanche,

Frantz Fanon, Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok. There are also “neo-Freudians such as Karen Horney, Erich Fromm, and Harry Stack Sullivan. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) was one of the pioneers of modern-day psychology” (Birnbach 3). As the originator of Psychoanalysis, Freud distinguishes himself as an intellectual giant. Since 1920, according to Eagleton,

> Sigmund Freud had made publications affirming and reaffirming the workings of the conscious and unconscious human mind and the interpretation and criticism of literature; the interpretation of the motivation and the intention of the author; the psychological and emotional outburst, instinctual drive, desires, and tensions underlying the texts. The mental is the unconscious and the unconscious is the psyche. (97)

Freud is the father of psychoanalysis. In exploring psychoanalysis, Freud focuses on the unconscious aspects of personality. He presents new techniques for understanding human behaviour, and his efforts have resulted in the most comprehensive theory of personality and psychotherapy ever developed. According to Freud, the human mind is like an iceberg. It is mostly hidden in the unconscious. He believes that the “conscious level of the mind is similar to the tip of the iceberg which could be seen, but the unconscious is mysterious and hidden. Freud suggests that the unconscious consists of aspects of personality of which a person is unaware; hence dreams provide the main, but not only, access to the unconscious” (Eagleton 136-7). For Freud, the conscious is that which is within our awareness. The preconscious also consists of that which is not in immediate awareness but is easily accessible. He goes further to explain that ‘where the conscious is most damagingly at work – is in the psychological disturbance of one form or another’ (Eagleton 137). In essence, the human mind (psyche) becomes the central force that controls the thought, emotion, and behaviour of an individual.

According to Freud as observed by Barry, “the psyche is made of three parts: the ego, the superego, and the id which correspond to human consciousness. At the level of ego, the unconscious human desires, which are basically sexual in nature, are prompted and are checked

by the conscious (superego) – the alter ego which may be dictated by society's moral standard or values. When these desires are thus censored, repression occurs. These desires are, so to say, repressed into the unconscious" (191). Stephen Martins however explains that "repression is not destruction. The desires do not go away" (356). Eagleton further observes that " they are merely forgotten as ignored crisis, un-admitted desires, or traumatic memories forced out of consciousness or awareness and sublimated into the realm of the unconscious" (97).

Psychoanalysis aims at bringing that which is at the unconscious or subconscious level into the level of consciousness. In other words, psychoanalysis helps to capture and release repressed emotions or memories in a victim of violence in order to achieve catharsis. In line with the above views, Eagleton further observes that the "aim of psychoanalysis is to uncover the hidden causes of the neurosis in order to relieve the patient of his or her conflicts, so dissolving the distressing symptoms" (138).

Freud's idea on psychoanalysis is built on his model of the human mind. In Freud's view, the mind is divided into three layers: "conscious (the home of current thoughts or emotions), preconscious/subconscious (the home of memory which can be recalled), and unconscious (the deepest level which drives behaviours, both primitive and instinctual desires)" (McLeod www.simplypsychology). Freud later developed more structured model of the mind (id, ego, and superego) to coexist with his first ideas on consciousness and unconsciousness.

In 1923 Freud described his constructs of the id, ego and the superego. The id is the most primitive part of our personality which functions at an unconscious level. It operates according to the pleasure principle and simply focuses on instinctual drives and desires. Freud believes that "biological instincts are found in id" (Freud *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* 14). According to him,

every human has a life and death instinct. The life instinct is called *eros*, while the death instinct is called *thanatos*. Both are integral parts of the id. And the energy for this mechanism is libido, a flowing, dynamic force. "*Eros* is simply the instinct to survive which propels or pushes a person to engage in life sustaining activities; while *thanatos* which is the death instinct controls or pushes the aggressive, destructive or violent behaviour in an individual" (Freud *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* 18).

The *ego* is different from the *id* as it is extremely objective and acts as both a check and conduit for the id. It operates according to the "reality principle" and deals with the demands of the environment. In essence, it works in a socially appropriate way to control the needs of the *id.* It regulates the flow of libido and keeps the *id* in check, thus acting as a "control center" of the personality. It is the superego which represents the values and standards of an individual's personality. It is the portion of the mind which acts as an internal judge, it punishes the ego with feelings of guilt or its rewards, which lead to feelings of pride and heightened self esteem. The superego is a characteristic of the personality which strives for perfection (Freud *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* 14-15).

Freud believes that his structured model of the mind (id, ego, and superego) could be in conflict at anytime since they perform different functions. Therefore, a person's ego adopts one or more defence mechanisms to protect him or her when he or she could not cope with the stress of the conflict. The defence mechanisms include: repression, denial, projection, displacement, regression and sublimation (Eagleton 132-134). Repression is an unconscious defence whereby the ego pushes disturbing feelings, ideas or thoughts out of consciousness. Eagleton argues that "what has dominated human history to date is the need to labour and for Freud, that harsh

necessity means that we must repress some of our tendencies to pleasure and gratification. In essence, every human being has to undergo this repression of what Freud named the 'pleasure principle' by the reality principle'… if too much is demanded of us, we are likely to fall sick" (131). This form of "sickness is known as neurosis" (Eagleton 132).

In 'Denial' as a defence mechanism, the ego blocks the traumatic experiences from consciousness causing the individual to disbelieve the reality of the experiences. 'Projection' as a form of defence mechanism pushes the ego to resolve the internal and external conflicts by attributing a person's unacceptable emotions and thoughts to another person. In 'Displacement' as a defence mechanism, the victim of violence satisfies her impulse by releasing frustration directed on a person to another person in socially unacceptable way. Sublimation as a defence mechanism is the opposite of displacement because it satisfies a victim's impulse by releasing frustration directed on a person to another person in a socially accepted manner (McLeod www.simplypsychology). In 'Regression' as a defence mechanism, a victim moves backward in thoughts and mannerism in order to cope with an overwhelming violent event. This explains why an adult behaves like a child after encountering a traumatic violent experience.

According to Freud, the disparity and development of the id, ego and the superego, determine an individual's behaviour in a given situation, which in turn results in the development of the personality. Freud places great importance on the early development of a child as he believed that what an adult will be is largely determined by childhood experiences. Freud refers these early years of development as the psychosexual years of development (Eagleton 133). These early years manifests through a number of stages. Significantly, every child experiences these different stages. These stages are the oral stage (first year of life), the anal stage (second year),

phallic stage (third through fifth year), a period of latency (from 6 to 12), and the genital stage (after puberty) (Eagleton 133). Freud in presenting his argument further stresses the possibility that a child may have some sort of delay on a particular stage. This condition can lead to a fixation or an incomplete development of the personality (Freud *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* 23-24).

A critical event during the early stages of childhood is summarized in Freud's Oedipus complex and Electra complex. Freud believes that both "sexes encounter and must deal with the issue of castration, which results from boys developing sexual attraction toward their mothers, and girls developing sexual attraction towards their fathers" (Eagleton 133). A boy-child may have feelings of resentment towards his father for a perceived superiority he holds. In fact, the boy sees his father as an obstacle between him and his mother. At the same time, "the boy also fears retaliation by his father through separation. This separation is called castration" (Eagleton 133). In essence, the boy is overwhelmed by his fear of castration. Since the boy loves his father, these feelings are repressed and he begins to identify with the father, adopting his values. Eagleton explains that "what persuades the boy-child to abandon his incestuous desire for the mother is the father's threat of castration" (134).

Similarly girls develop "hostility towards their mothers, unconsciously blaming their mothers for not being equal with boys" (Freud *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* 24-25). They assume that something is missing and feel inadequate (penis envy). A sort of self-fixation begins when, after childhood, her consciousness divides (and becomes a third party "watchman") around two collaborative units: the first part being what remains of the actual ego from childhood; the second being the narcissistic "idealized" ego, powered by the re-directed, or sublimated (as

opposed to repressed, a psychical dead-end) sexual energies of the unconscious/libido and shaped by parental and social factors into a distinct lens by which she measures herself and regulates her behaviour, assuming the collaboration holds (Freud *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* 24-25).

According to Erich Fromm in *The Revision of Psychoanalysis,* a person's development is often determined by forgotten events in early childhood, rather than by inherited traits alone. Fromm explains that:

> Human behaviour and cognition is largely determined by irrational drives that are rooted in the unconscious; therefore any attempts to bring those drives into awareness triggers resistance in the form of defence mechanisms, particularly repression. Therefore, conflicts between conscious and unconscious material can result in mental disturbances such as neurosis, neurotic traits, anxiety and depression. Hence, unconscious material can be found in dreams and unintentional acts, including mannerisms and slips of the tongue. Liberation from the effects of the unconscious is achieved by bringing this material into the conscious mind through therapeutic intervention. The 'centerpiece of the psychoanalytic process' is the transference, whereby patients relive their infantile conflicts by projecting onto the analyst feelings of love, dependence and anger. (12-13)

Psychoanalysis as a therapy is based on the observation that individuals are often unaware of many factors that determine their emotions and behaviour. Psychoanalytic treatment demonstrates how these unconscious factors affect current relationships and patterns of behaviour, traces them back to their historical origins, shows how they have changed, and helps individuals to deal better with the realities of adult life.

The development of psychoanalytic theory from the work of Sigmund Freud has a major influence on literary criticism. It helps in exploring the relationship between the writer and text, analysis of character in psychological terms, family and parent-child relationships, relationship between the reader and the text, construction of identity in relation to the social structure. It is

imperative to note that Freud built much of psychoanalysis on his reinterpretation of his patients' trauma; thus trauma theory also becomes very relevant in exploring the experiences of characters in the selected novels for this research.

Nicholas T. Rand in the 'Introduction' of *The Shell and the Kernel* observes that the book is an approach to psychoanalysis and their psychoanalytic approach to literature (Abraham and Torok 11). According to Rand,

> This is a matter not simply of giving psychoanalytic interpretations of literature, but rather of transforming literature into a resource for clinical insight …. Thus literature can deepen psychoanalytic understanding by giving us nuanced and artful accounts of situations … the study of fictitious life-scenarios in literature parallels the psychoanalytic search for ever finer means of comprehending people and their joys or sufferings. (Abraham and Torok 11-12)

Basically, Psychoanalysis as a theory finds connections among an individual's unconscious mental processes. This connection is linked to an emotional wound resulting to psychological injury or distress that leads to trauma.Trauma theory is an extension of psychoanalysis. Judith Herman in *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence — from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* asserts that "to study psychological trauma is to come face to face both with human vulnerability and with the capacity for evil in human nature" (8). Herman further stresses that the "study of psychological trauma means bearing witness to horrible events" (8). Meek supports Herman's view by emphasizing the "role psychological theories of trauma play in explaining how life-threatening situations or physical violent experiences can cause individuals to suffer behavioural and memory disorders over extended periods of time" (5). Herman maintains that,

> At the moment of trauma, the victim is rendered helpless by overwhelming force. In essence, traumatic events overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection, and meaning. Traumatic events are extraordinary, not

> because they occur rarely, but rather because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life. (33)

Trauma theory is an area of study that bridges a gap between psychology and the humanities. In modern literary criticism, trauma theory plays a very important role in exploring a literary text. Cathy Caruth, in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History,* discusses the connection between literature and psychoanalysis. In line with the above view, Rand observes that, "Psychoanalysis insists on the particularity of any individual's life story, the specificity of texts, and the singularity of historical situations" (qtd. in Abraham and Torok "Introduction" 2). Therefore according to Rand, Abraham and Torok have succeeded in developing "interpretive strategies with powerful implications for clinicians, literary theorists, feminists, philosophers, and all others interested in the uses and limits of psychoanalysis. (qtd. in Abraham and Torok "Introduction" 2)

The adoption of psychoanalysis in the study of literature is very important, because it helps in exploring the character's mind (the memory of traumatic event) and behaviour as he/she passes through violent emotional conflict. Literary texts are like metaphors which expose the unconscious of a given fictional work. Mary Ellmann suggests that "by attending to the rhetoric of the texts, to the echoes and the recesses of words themselves…psychoanalysis is doomed to rediscover its own myth grotesquely multiplied throughtout the course of literature"(3). Barry also expresses the same view by "linking poems, plays and novels to the unconscious through symbols, images, proverbs, simile, metaphor, idioms and others" (117). On the basis of the above submissions, characters' intrinsic or psychological dispositions are exposed in order to interpret their external actions. Hence, the oblivious is examined against the conscious actions of a given character.

The incorporation of trauma theory into exploring literary studies is realized in relation to the influence of psychoanalysis; it has also helped in explaining or exploring traumatic experiences that overwhelm the victim during violence or violent acts. The term "trauma theory" first appears in Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. The theory, arguably, stems from the insightful interpretation and elaboration of Freud's deliberations on traumatic experiences in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle and Moses and Monotheism*. What Freud once refers to as "traumatic neurosis," the American Psychiatric Association in 1980 officially refers to as "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder" (PTSD), a concept central to trauma theory.

Caruth in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* defines trauma or "post-traumatic stress disorder" (PTSD) as "a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviours stemming from the event, along with numbing that may have begun during or after the experience, and possibly also increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event" (4). Caruth suggests that the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly….To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event (*Trauma* 5). Shamaila Dodhy further observes that "trauma is embodied in the event which afterwards return to life as forms of memory, nightmares, or flashbacks. In addition, contemporary trauma theory identifies what has not been fully absorbed by conscious, but acknowledged by unconscious, the unspeakable traumatic memory" ("Traumatic Memory…" 234).

The concept of dissociation and traumatic memory are explored by Pierre Marie Janet, a French psychologist, philosopher and psychotherapist. Janet is among the psychologists who claim that dissociation and the subconscious are connected to an individual's past experiences and current

traumatic experience. Onno Van Der Hart and Rutger Horst support the above assertion and maintain that:

> Although the concept of dissociation had been described earlier, Pierre Janet was the first to show clearly and systematically how it is the most direct psychological defence against overwhelming traumatic experiences. He demonstrated that dissociative phenomena play an important role in widely divergent post-traumatic stress responses which he included under the 19th-century diagnosis of hysteria. (1)

Janet's dissociation theory explores the distinctive studies of "trauma based on nine concepts: psychological automatism, consciousness, subconsciousness, narrowed field of consciousness, dissociation, amnesia, suggestibility, fixed idea, and emotion" (Hart and Horst 1). In exploring the above concepts, Janet focuses on the" function of dissociation in traumatically induced mental disorders. This is why his theory is relevant in research depicting traumatic stress" (Hart and Horst 1).

According to Janet, dissociation occurs when there is a detachment from the environment and experiences such as physical and emotional experiences. In essence, dissociation suggests a "separation from reality which leads to neurosis as a result of an overwhelming stressful event" (Dell 2). The term 'neurosis' which is also called post-traumatic stress disorder could be perceived as a person's inability to integrate his/her traumatic experiences" (Storr et al 120). Onno Van Der Hart and Rutger Horst further observe that,

> A number of different factors can disturb the integrative capacity and lead to the splitting off (dédoublement) and isolation of certain psychological regulating systems. These dissociated nuclei of consciousness continue to lead lives of their own…. Different nuclei of consciousness alternate in taking over the behaviour, or interfere with each other. These dissociated states of consciousness can be of varying degrees of complexity. The simplest form is a single idée fixe (fixed idea), which may be defined as an image, thought, or statement, with accompanying feelings, physical posture, and bodily movements. Traumatic memories are typical examples of such fixed ideas. The most complex of these dissociated states of consciousness are the alter personalities of patients with multiple personality disorder (MPD). (5)

Janet's doctoral dissertation, L'Au-*tomatisme psychologique* (1889) contains his first study on dissociation. In the research, Janet discovers that most of his patients suffered from unresolved (dissociated) traumatic memories. Janet's dissertation is very descriptive because it covers occurrences exhibited in hysteria. As a result, it forms the basis for an extensive series of clinical studies on hysteria, which can be classified under his dissociation theory (Hart and Horst 4). Hart and Horst further suggest that,

> Janet's dissociation theory should inspire us to develop a common theoretical approach to widely varying post-traumatic stress responses, thereby fostering a sense of unity in an otherwise highly fragmented field. One aspect of Janet's approach that may prove useful is his emphasis on the (sub) conscious nature of dissociative phenomena such as traumatic memories. Bearing this in mind may help therapists from becoming stuck in a symptom oriented or psychodynamic approach when dissociated fixed ideas need to be addressed. (8)

It is very vital to note that traumatic experiences produce different results in individuals because of the way they react and accept such experiences. In other words, not everyone who experiences a traumatic event is psychologically traumatized (Storr et al 121).

In depicting a traumatized memory in a given text, the literary artist captures the emotional and sudden impact of violent behaviour on a given character through flashback and nightmares. In essence, hallucination, dreams or nightmares force the traumatized character into an imaginary world that divides his/her identity. The emotional involvement of the character is thus trapped in the traumatic memory – a memory caused by traumatic event. However, the unconscious has a deeper meaning; "it is a place a victim cannot think and the part beyond the conscious" (Eagleton 97). Janet (1894) quoted in Hart and Horst assert that,

> Conscious experiences are part of much more extensive fixed ideas – that is, "dreams" or traumatic memories – which may be related in one person to an insult, to an accident in another, and in a third to the death of a family member… these dreams and memories

> "infiltrate" personal consciousness and disturb it. Thus, phenomena which today are called "flashbacks" and "intrusive thoughts" are regarded by Janet as dissociative phenomena, and as a part of subconscious fixed ideas. (7)

S. Felman and D. Laub also maintain that "the traumatic event, although real, took place outside the parameters of 'normal' reality, such as causality, sequence, place and time. Then, trauma is thus an event that has no beginning, no ending, no before, no during and no after" (69). Felman and Laub are indeed very pessimistic about the recovery of trauma survivors. According to them,

> Trauma survivors live not with memories of the past, but with an event that could not and did not proceed through to its completion, has no ending, attained no closure, and therefore, as far as its survivors are concerned, continues into the present and is current in every respect. The survivor, indeed, is not truly in touch either with the core of his traumatic reality or with the fatedness of its reenactments, and thereby remains entrapped in both. (69)

Felman and Laub go further to explain that "literature appreciates because, traumatic experiences remain open with all its horror, nightmares, silence both cognitive and linguistic breakdown. The above are shrouded in contemporary trauma theory because they threaten the victims' autonomy" (69).

From the foregoing, it is clear that traumatic memory is unreliable since the trauma survivor is unable to establish a connection between the traumatic event and the expression of his/her thoughts. First and foremost, for a traumatic memory to be decoded into a narrative memory, the survivor of the traumatic experience should be able to recognize that a violent event occurred. This is usually very challenging because trauma survivors are overwhelmed by obsessive fear of their past violent experiences. One must not fail to draw attention to the futility of uttering the traumatic experience which is marked by fragmented thoughts, unreal images, limited information and distorted views. Herman observes that "the helpless victim only escapes from her situation not by action in the real world but rather by altering her state of consciousness"

(42). Antze and Lambek quoted in Shamalia Dodhy suggest that “memories are never simply records of the past, but are interpretive reconstructions that bear the imprint of local narrative conventions, cultural assumptions, discursive formations and practices, and social contexts of recall and commemoration” (vii). In addition, trauma theory helps in establishing violent experiences that have been absorbed by the unconscious which is perceived as the unutterable traumatic memory.

All of the above point to one thing – the trauma survivor needs a patient listener who can help him or her to articulate his or her trapped thoughts. Based on the above submissions, Caruth suggests that traumatic narrative is “a kind of double telling, the oscillation between a *crisis of death* and the correlative *crisis of life*: between the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival” (7). Psychological trauma is marked by a “state of viocelessness which naturally deals with the unspeakable narrative of the trauma victim” (Dodhy and Kaur 74). Anne Whitehead in *Trauma Fiction* suggests that this unspeakable narrative can be depicted through different “experimental forms emerging out of postmodernist and postcolonial fiction which offer the contemporary novelists a promising vehicle for communicating the unreality of trauma, while still remaining faithful to the facts of history” (87). Whitehead points out that trauma fiction as a postwar consciousness is “deeply explored in the theoretical movement of postmodernism and postcolonialism (81). Therefore, the central consciousness of a trauma fiction seems to be expressed in “intertexuality, repetition and a dispersed or fragmented narrative voice” (Whitehead 84).

In essence, the depiction of traumatic experience in fiction motivates the creative artist to explore psychological struggle as a state of confusion with regard to time, place or identity. In fact, the character is fixed in delusion, as she is unable to resist confrontation with actual facts. Violent

experiences produce different reactions in different people as a result of the overwhelming stressful experiences. In line with the above view, Caruth in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* states that "the pathology consists, rather, solely in the *structure of its experience* or reception: the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated *possession* of the one who experiences it" (4). According to Caruth, "the fact that the threat is recognized as such by the mind *one moment too late*. The shock of the mind's relation to the threat of death is thus not the direct experience of the threat, but precisely the *missing* of this experience, the fact that, not being experienced *in time*, it has not yet been fully known" (62). In modern critical parlance, Roger Luckhurst observes that:

> The reality of post-traumatic reaction and the struggle of professional psychologists to abolish them cannot be denied. This spirit of investigation reaffirms that trauma is a complex knot that binds together multiple strands of knowledge and which can be best understood through plural, multidisciplinary perspectives. (214)

Luckhurst further explains that modernization and the complexities of human experiences have increased the level of violence in society. This is to say that violence poses greater risks to human life through the experience of trauma which divides identity through disorientation. In essence, literary artists according to Luckhurst,

> Seek to work through the traumatic past, premising communality not on preserving trauma but on transforming its legacy. This is an attempt to transform Freud's distinctions between remembering, repeating and working in 1914 into a model for cultural or political critique. This is perhaps why Toni Morrison's *Beloved* remains such an important text: the melancholic ghost continues to haunt, but the other daughter, Denver, is allowed to start to refashion some other kind of community afterwards. (*The Trauma Question*… 213)

Therefore in discussing the traumatic memory and the psychotherapy of survivors, Peter Levine suggests that, "the multidimensional structure of traumatic memory as it is stored in the brain and held in the body, … misconceptions about so-called recovered memories have caused much

unnecessary pain and suffering for patients and for their families, while also creating confusion and self-doubt for therapists who treat them" ("Introduction"… 1). Obviously, traumatic memory is opposed to narrative memory which maintains a chronological order of narration in depicting a given experience.

Writing in the contemporary African society with its oppressive customs, catastrophic wars, economic misery, sexual violations and unimagined psychological tensions caused by colonial repression and political instability, establishes trauma theory within the context of trauma fiction. This research adopts discussion on trauma by Sigmund Freud, Cathy Caruth, Anne Whitehead, Judith Herman and Roger Luckhurst and others to analyze the selected texts. The concept of trauma and memory as presented by the above psychological theorists emphasize the necessity to recreate through narrative recall of traumatic experience. This view stresses on Kali Tal's statement that the remembrance of trauma is always an approximate account of the past, since traumatic experience includes knowledge, and representation. Tal suggests that an "accurate representation of trauma can never be achieved without recreating the event since, by its very definition, trauma lies beyond the bounds of 'normal' conception" (15).

In conclusion, psychoanalysis and trauma theory are employed as critical tools in interpreting the traumatic experiences of the female protagonists in the selected novels. The above theories examine violent experiences that damage both the conscious and unconscious psyche of the female characters. Feminism as a theory is thus employed as a vehicle for female consciousness and self –actualization towards emancipation in a patriarchal system that limits their growth and development.

Empirical Studies

The researcher investigates works previously done in this area of research in order to ascertain some ideas that need to be explored and covered. Many scholars have carried out research on Buchi Emecheta's *The Bride Price* (1976) and Yvonne Vera's *Under the Tongue* (1996), Nuruddin Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* (2013) and Ikechukwu Asika's *Tamara* (2013). However, this research further reviews other scholars' critiques in order to find a gap and contribute to literary scholarship.

Review of Scholarship on Buchi Emecheta's *The Bride Price*

Feminist activities in African literature have been currently on the increase in the last two decades. This is as a result of the oppressive conditions that present girls and women as victims of their social-cultural environment. Grace E. Okereke in her article "Education as a Colonial Heritage and the Nigerian Women Literature "assesses the positive impact of education on Africa women writers including Buchi Emecheta and that from timid attempts at self-assertion through protest in the traditional novels, Emecheta has defined herself boldly as a feminist through her assertive women" (139). Emecheta acknowledges that she "sees things through an African woman's eyes" ("Feminism with a Small "f" " 552). In "Feminism with a Small "f" " she confesses: "I chronicle the little happenings in the lives of the African women I know. I did not know that by doing so I was going to be called a feminist. But if I am now a feminist then I am an African feminist" (552). Okereke also upholds the popular view that "Emecheta has helped to carve a niche for women in Nigerian and African literary history" ("Education as a Colonial…" 140). Ernest Emenyonu observes that "Emecheta has become a powerful and influential voice not only on the African scene but in the entire Third World" (252). To

Emenyonu, “the lot of the African woman is Buchi Emecheta’s thematic preoccupation and the picture is nothing to smile about” (252).

According to Rebbeca Boostrom, *The Bride Price* “depicts the many realities of lived traditional customary law of the Ibo people, that reveal the need for social changes which were already in the process of being enacted in modern law, whether customary law or received British law” (57).

L.L Kwatsha in “Some Aspects of Gender Inequality in Selected African Literary Texts” observes that “male domination is very pervasive 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” (129). In describing Emecheta’s girl character in *The Bride Price*, Kwatsha further explains that,

> Aku-nna suffers patriarchy’s psychic and societal repression of women. The phallic order is disconnecting her sexual being from her maternal being so that she (Aku-nna) can serve the basic reproductive and economic needs of the culture, as her body is viewed as an object of sexual pleasure for men. Akunna’s mother, instead of fighting against what Okoboshi has done, condones it. Menstrual blood that is supposed to build a strong relationship between Akunna and her mother, Ma Blackie, instead separates them through patriarchal and cultural customs. It destroys the bond between mother and daughter instead of intensifying it. (150)

Also, in analyzing *The Bride Price*, Razinatu T. Mohammad writes that “Emecheta’s major preoccupation is the female gender, within given socio-cultural and economic settings. She also examines how such settings touch on the lives of girls and women to the extent that they begin to inflict pain upon one another. She is particularly conscious of the fact that women pose the greatest obstacles to the lives of their fellow women” (463). Helen Chukwuma summarizes the above views by echoing in “Positivism and the Female Crisis: The Novels of Buchi Emecheta” that *The Bride Price* has “filled the gaping gender gap between male and female characterization

and shown the other side of the coin" (2). She goes further to state that "Emecheta's feminism is seen in her portrayal of female characters from the slave girl prototype to the mother and single fulfilled woman (2)".

In reviewing *The Bride Price*, Darkowaa Adu-kofi examines the life of a girl caught in a web of tradition, lust and greed. Adu-kfi observes that Emecheta's brilliant style of writing and the traditional proverbs allow readers to sympathize with Aku-nna (ayibamagazine.com). In line with the above views, Chukwuma in "Positivism and the Female Crisis: The Novels of Buchi Emecheta" states that "*The Bride Price* depicts the experiences and life of a young adolescent female asserting herself" (6). *The New Yorker* goes further to make a summary of *The Bride Price* by commenting that 'the author has a plain , engaging style and manages to convey all the lushness, poverty, superstition, and casual cruelty of a still exotic culture while keeping her tales as sharp as a folk ballad' (4). Similarly, Hilary Bailey in *Tribune* remarks that the novel "manages to pull off the trick of bringing the reader through to the realities common to us all" (3).

To show that the female gender is humiliated in many ways through traditional practices that hinge on the tenets of gender socialization and inequality, Naaki writes:

> Anywhere in the world, to be a female is to be instantly othered. It is to be in a constant fight for autonomy, for personhood, for control over one's body and mind; for survival. *In the Bride Price*, Buchi Emecheta is a capable surgeon; slicing right to the heart of what it meant to be a girl in Nigeria in the 1950s. With an uncompromising deftness and an artless charm, she explores the minutiae of life in South-Eastern colonial Nigeria; holding up the light the many microaggressions that add to the framework of patriarchal oppression institutionalized as culture and tradition. (1)

Naaki goes further to explain that "*The Bride Price* is a socio-cultural record of the customs and tradition of the Igbo people. Emecheta painstakingly highlights the many cultural practices that

originate from, and in turn, legitimize the insidiously discriminatory view of certain members – usually women – of the society as inferior"(1). Naaki also observes that "Aku-nna is the conduit, and her life, as well as those of other female characters, explore the enslavement of girls and women by traditional practices such as the payment of bride price, widowhood rites, courting games, marriage by abduction and the Osu Caste system"(1). In line with the above views, Alka Vishwakarma observes that "Buchi Emecheta has placed girls and women at the center of their culture and their novels comment on cultural conflicts. They conspicuously exhibit the cultural institutions, beliefs, norms, and practices that are used to justify the gender-based violence put to women" (997).

According to Rose Ure Mezu "Emecheta, born in Nigeria but living in London since her early twenties, has written novels that examine the African female, or slave girl, enslaved by oppressive and antiquated patriarchal/cultural mores that clearly fit into the French authors' definition of Oedipus as the 'figurehead' of imperialism, as legitimizing those 'agencies' or territorialities of 'power and paranoia', such as the laws of the fathers, family, community; and culture" (131). Barnali Tahbildar equally asserts that "*The Slave Girl*, one of Emecheta's main themes involving slavery is the assertion that in Nigerian society, all girls and women are enslaved to and by men …. Whereas Emecheta presents the Nigerian females as continuously enslaved to male master figures" (1).

With the dexterous manipulation of feminist thought, Alka Vishwakarma suggests that "girls and women in Nigeria are twice colonized as the nation was colonized and the natives are treated as the 'others' or subaltern. Women and girls could be considered other of the other, doubly colonized. The commodification or the bride price suggests they were no more than mere bodies" (1001).

Catherine Obianuju Acholonu in her work, *Africa the New Frontier: Towards a Truly Global Literary Theory for the 21st Century* traces the humiliating experiences of the female characters in Emecheta's works beginning with *The Slave Girl* to *The Bride Price* and she explains that the author emphasizes the fact "that at every point in a woman's life she is always somebody's property" (218). Endurance Anegbe, Abdulhameed Majeed and Gariagan Gift equally assert that "Emecheta's writing gives an impression to readers that specifically, Nigerian culture is passive and patriarchal and that she does not see a suitable position for women in such a depressing male dominated society. In essence, the pivotal issues in the novel are slavery, motherhood, marriage and African traditions over its influence of the modern world" ("Oppression...." 163).

Jane Duran, in his analysis of *The Bride Price* for its overall literary strength and particularly for its use of syncretism observes that 'it exhibits strong strands of the postcolonial including the trope that the female body can be the site of multiple instantiations of hegemony and dominance' (2). For Hamid Farahmandian and Shima Ehsaninia, *The Bride Price* "elucidates and explores the vivid encounter of modernity and tradition with the dominance on each other from the perspective of the author who does her best to bring hope of the future back and eradicate the superstition of the past in the sights of African varied caste" (191).

C.M Dhukila sheds light on the inequality issues and cultural taboos that created a pitiful picture of Nigerian women and their role in the society. According to Dhukila, "Emecheta's novel gives an illuminating glimpse to the readers that the Nigerian culture is passive and patriarchal. He sees the novel as a criticism against traditional values that impinge on women's right and autonomy" (40).

Again, Harry Olufunwa recognizes Emecheta's idea of marriage in *The Bride Price* as 'essentially undefinable and inherently contradictory, therefore open to manipulation by the dominant gender in such a way as to make it almost meaningless' (29). To Olufunwa, Emecheta exposes the 'arbitrary nature of stable gender roles by inventing them or rendering them inoperable' (29). Evidencing further the issue of gender politics through marginalization and oppression of the female gender, Ambreen Kharbe observes that Emecheta's novel exposes the 'injustice of traditional, male-oriented African social customs that relegate the female gender to a life of child-bearing, servitude and victimization' (2). In the summation, Debarshi Nath and Juri Dutta examine 'Emecheta's narrative prowess, the injustice of male prejudice and the inflexible social structures in her native country' (2). Nath and Dutta further observe that Emecheta's novel depicts a "clash between emerging modern values changing African lives and the traditional ways of life Africans are known for. By this, Emecheta describes the female experience and looks at the African woman's issues from a gendered perspective" (2).

From the foregoing discussion, an attempt has been made to examine scholars' views on Buchi Emecheta's *The Bride Price*. The scholars who have studied Buchi Emecheta's selected novel approached it by exposing and depicting the plight of the female gender under oppressive powers in society. The researcher, having reviewed the scholars' views and areas covered, decides to contribute to gender discourse by investigating how traumatic oppressive childhood experiences affect the psychological state of the girl characters which also contribute in shaping their personalities in adulthood.

Review of Scholarship on Yvonne Vera's *Under the Tongue*

Yvonne Vera sees writing as "a radiance that captures everything in a fine profile" ("Writing Near the Bone" 558). She further confesses: "there is no essential truth about being a female writer. The best writing comes from the boundaries, the ungendered spaces between male and female" ("Writing Near the Bone" 558).

In exploring Yvonne Vera's novels, Meg Samuelson comments that "Yvonne Vera's writing offers a critique of colonialism, oppositional nationalism and patriarchal structures, and their customary ideas of land ownership and control over the female body and its fertility" (15). Pei Yuan also observes that "the female gender and the nation lie in the centre of her novels. Hence, Vera's works are concerned with women, her country – Zimbabwe and the spiritual connection between the people and their land" (11). Yuan further observes that "Vera excels in creating thrilling scenes to imprint those female characters deeply in readers' minds. To Yuan, tortured women (such as Phephelaphi in *Butterfly Burning* and Thenjiwe and Nonceba in *The Stone Virgins*) and daughter (such as Zhizha in *Under the Tongue*) raped by her father boldly present us with some cruelties that women go through in a male-dominated society"(6).

Robert Muponde and Ranka Primorac in exploring girlhood in *Under the Tongue* look into the "suffering of a little girl raped by her father. They suggest that Vera places the struggles of the traumatized and silenced voices on an equal footing with the national liberation struggles" (*Versions*… 36). The above views explain why Vera chose the titles of her novels. In essence, *Under the Tongue* is a good example of the "writer's quest in depicting female experiences and sufferings in Zimbabwean society where girls suffer in silence and are expected not to utter their painful experiences" (*Versions* … 36).

Also, Carolyn Martin Shaw, on her part, observes "that in Vera's works, gender issues are explicitly presented. Not only because all the protagonists in Vera's works are young females – defeated by maternity; infanticide, rape, marginalized class, the interconnections between mother and daughter are within Vera's concerns" ("A Woman Speaks…" 85). No doubt, the above thematic concerns in *Under the Tongue* project Vera's feminist ethos. Vera "is not pleased with the condition of the female gender which explains why she tackles the subject of rape, incest and sexual exploitation in order to depict such inhuman acts that have rendered the female gender speechless and heavy-tongued" ("A Woman Speaks…" 85).

Ifeyinwa Ogbazi in "The African Female Writer and Her Craft: Aspects of Yvonne Vera's Peculiar Feminist Vision" examines the orality of Vera's narrative. She observes that,

> In *Under the Tongue*, Grandmother who is rooted in the oral tradition endeavours to apply the soothing balm to her devastated granddaughter, Zhizha, by telling her stories about the land. Vera often insists that authentic Africans are expected to be well grounded in the oral culture. They should be orators in their own rights, and be able to communicate flawlessly in the indigenous language. (81)

Ogbazi therefore insists that "Vera's choice of language embodies a potent force that is evocative and vitalizing. She also appreciates African myths and rituals, one of the reasons why she frowns at modernity, believing that the latter has wreaked havoc on traditional rituals which are now seen as inhibitive and restrictive" ("The African Female Writer…." 81-82).

Elika Ortega-Guzman in "Orality and the Power of Silence in Yvonne Vera's *Under the Tongue*" has explored the way Vera takes "the use of orality a step further by 'oralizing' the thoughts, rather than the words, of her mute protagonist, Zhizha. This oralizing constitutes a narrative paradox as the narrative comes from the protagonist's mute voice" (103). Similarly, Julie Cairnie comments that:

> Vera manages to make readers think, to process emotional and intellectual experience, a requisite for (good) literature ….Yvonne Vera does not speak exclusively to an educated audience, but she does have expectations for her readers. They, like Zhizha, have to work hard to discover meaning in relationships, in language, and in broken promises. And again like Zhizha, Yvonne finds her own voice in *Under the Tongue*, a voice which promises to be with readers of Southern African Literature for a long time. (30)

With regard to Vera's novels, Corwin Mhlahlo explains that "in most patriarchal societies, especially those of Africa, females have no control of their bodies… consequently, they can defiantly enjoy their sexual encounters as expressions of sexual freedom," (104). The above expressions explain why the female protagonist, Zhizha in *Under the Tongue* is sexually abused by her father. This act of incest signifies the oppression that men subject the female gender to in order to have control over their bodies.

Similarly, Shaw observes categorically that the "protagonists in all Vera's novels suffer some forms of bodily distortion or disassociation and psychic disintegration" ("A Woman Speaks… 32). Samuelson further states that the women's recovery stems from "remembering". She explains that "the violated, dismembered female body moves to the centre of the narratives as Vera's novels envisage the means by which the raped body can find recovery. The recovery and reconstitution of the body itself is located in the act of remembering" (93). Equally, Ogbazi in "The African Female Writer and Her Craft: Aspects of Yvonne Vera's Peculiar Feminist Vision", comments on the exploitation of the female body. Ogbazi observes that Vera,

> As a feminist postcolonial writer, and in her pursuit of social justice, her struggles can be said to be operative on different levels. In the main, it is a struggle to salvage the voiceless women of Zimbabwe and women generally – to give them a voice. She also attempts to redeem the female body by suggesting that every human being has a distinct life of his own, and that this life must be valued, respected and protected. Thus, the female body must be delivered from the stifling demands of patriarchal culture and the economic exploitation occasioned by contemporary realities. With the use of striking aesthetic colours, she confronts patriarchy and upturns societal taboos. She also

> challenges the Zimbabwean men, seeking to redeem an entire country that has been trapped in postcolonial anarchy. (88)

Martina Kopf explores the unjustifiable violation of girls' rights in Zimbabwe in order to expose the consequences of such acts in society. In analyzing *Under the Tongue,* Kopf focuses on "sexual abuse and some general aspects of the narrative representation of traumatic experiences…as they are experienced by victims of violence" (243). Jean-Charles also examines the representation of rape by posting "the victim-survivor narrative as a form that grapples with the multiple responses to experiences as well as the different ways they figure on cultural production" (39).

The above reviews by different scholars on Yvonne Vera's selected novels explore the painful sexual violation of the girl characters in Zimbabwe which is hinged on patriarchy and societal struggles. The researcher tries to fill a gap in gender discourse by tracing how the young female character's traumatic experience has inhibited her childhood, destroyed her dreams, leaving her shattered, disillusioned and disoriented.

Review of Scholarship on Nuruddin Farah's *From a Crooked Rib*

F. Fiona Moolla in *Reading Nuruddin Farah* observes that "his novels trace a trajectory from a kind of proto-realism to modernism and postmodernism returning latterly to realism" (1). According to Molla, "what makes his oeuvre particularly compelling is the way his work foregrounds the close connection between the formation of the concept of the individual and the development of the novel as a genre" (*Reading Nuruddin Farah* 1).

In reviewing *From a Crooked Rib*, G. H. Moore examines the formation of the individual as seen in the plight of the female gender and significantly observes that "Farah intruded a marked sympathy and sensitivity towards womanhood into African Literature, which has generally

remained male-dominated in its orientation as the societies producing it. Such eccentricity can be tolerated in a woman writer but is scarcely looked for in the work of an author who is not only a man but a Moslem too" (3). Again, Helmi Ben Meriem asserts that Farah's novels explore the oppression of the female gender in Somalia. Meriem goes further to explain that:

> Most criticism of his fiction focuses mainly on four issues: the writing about Somalia in exile, the intertextuality between his fiction and other writers, the poetics of Farah's fiction, and the feminist aspects of his fiction and how it presents a new image of Somalia. Indeed, one of the most interesting readings of Farah's fiction is a gender-based one; the authenticity, with which Farah tackles the issues of womanhood and gender has pushed some of his readers to think of him as a woman, even sending him letters addressing him as "she". (83-84)

In line with the above view, J. I. Okonkwo has argued that Farah is one of few others who has "done the greatest justice to female existence in his writing" (217). Bardolph sees Farah as the "gift from Africa to contemporary world literature" ("On Nuruddin…" 121). Kirsten Hoist Petersen calls Farah "Africa's first feminist male writer" because his novel explores oppressive female predicament (qtd. in Meriem, "Reclaiming…" 249). To Judith Cochrane, Farah's "*From a Crooked Rib* shows the concern he has for the female gender who are treated as slaves or bartering objects by men in his country" ("The Theme…" 69).

Gloria A. Mixon in exploring the status of the female gender in *From a Crooked Rib* maintains that a "brilliant exception to the portrayal of African womanhood by an African male writer is found in the works of Nuruddin Farah" (2). Mixon sees Farah as "an African male writer who does not dabble in stereotypes of African womanhood but portrays women as independent individuals" (2). According to Mixon, "Farah is probably unequalled as an African male writer who frequently raises women from secondary roles and makes them the primary focus of his concern" (2).

Derek Wright in "Oligarchy and Orature in the Novels of Nuruddin Farah" praises Farah's aesthetic style in *From a Crooked Rib*. Wright observes that in Farah's fiction, "Somali oral traditions are shown to possess a resilient strength and even a revolutionary vitality; yet they are not envisaged polemically, as unsullied alternatives and sources of counter-discourse to post-colonial realities: rather, they are shown to be implicated in their evils and corruption" (86-87).

While analyzing Farah's depiction of female subjugation and oppression in patriarchal Somalia, Meriem observes that "patriarchy defines the Somali woman in three manners: the obedient daughter and wife, the site of the honour of society, and God's tamed creation. The Somali woman is defined in an extrinsic manner on the above mentioned levels, and any attempt to escape this definition comes only in resisting the three levels" (97). Abdiwali Sheikh Mohamed also observes that "Nuruddin Farah develops this idea of exploitation as coming from a false consciousness generated from tradition through the study of plot development" (3).

Francis Ngaboh-Smart examines *From a Crooked Rib* and explains that "Farah uses the demeaning roles to which a largely patriarchal Somali society relegates women to criticize some codes of his culture and to pose questions about human agency. He exposes the problems inherent in nationalist paradigms for talking about identity in Somalia and, one may add, in Africa as a whole" (86). Ahmad Dar Bilal also observes that "Somalian society is exorbitantly patriarchal in structure, thereupon unrelentingly atrocious and unjust in its dealings with women. It is one of the hellacious places for women to live in" (2267). Dar Bilal further adds that:

> Somalia women are subjected to many heinous crimes like Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), rape, and objectification. The rights and freedom of indigenous women are plundered and unjustly compromised. The rights of women are fobbed off by men in Somalia through the agency of manifold repressive institutions and exploitative ideologies like polygamy, clannish attitude, male chauvinism, and dictatorship. Somalia women are in double-bind, on one hand, they are subjugated and suppressed the internal

> patriarchy and on the other they are abused and wronged by the dictatorial governance. (2267)

Moolla examines the struggle of Farah's heroine from patriarchal subjugation and observes that the "heroine strives after independence and self-definition" (49). MCDowell further observes that the "heroine's story is a journey towards enlightenment, independence, freedom and awakening" (qtd in Molla, *Reading Nuruddin Farah*…49). In Ngozi Chuma-Udeh's view, "the heroine's journey is the "march for freedom from aborginalism to womanism", a march for a progress, new life ("Aborginalism…" 73).

In summary, it can be concluded that the critics who reviewed Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* examine oppressive female conditions and the attempts by the protagonist to override the forces of patriarchal oppression. This research fills a gap by exploring the psychological consequences of oppressive and violent actions on the mental and physical development of the girl character.

Review of Scholarship on Ikechukwu Asika's *Tamara*

Ezechi Onyerionwu in his review of Ikechukwu Asika's *Tamara* "ranks it among the few novels of 21st century Nigerian literature which not only achieves the above level of spirited artistic persuasion; but also with the narrative grandeur that can only be produced by a combination of raw, prodigious talent and an acute awareness of the artistic concomitants of the context" (1). Onyerionwu goes further to assert that:

> The talismanic element of Asika's fiction, even at face value, is his deployment of the epistolary technique, a mode in which the structures of narrative are built around the letter writing form. No other literary tool would have helped Asika tell the story of serially wounded soul of a young woman who is driven into the deadly claws of the now world-notorious sex slave-empire by her father's many parental blunders. (2)

Ifeoma Odinye reviews Asika's *Tamara* by examining morality and the African value system. Odinye observes that the "loss of values such as get rich quick syndrome, selfish desires, prostitution and endless search for freedom are responsible for the decline of moral values in

contemporary society" (92-93). Odinye discovers that the "author blames parents for failing in different ways, especially in performing their roles…. Asika presents the fictional story of Tamara, a young girl, who is lured into prostitution as she searches for moral support, love and freedom which are absent in her immediate family. Her father's attitude subjects her to emotional torture and sends her in an endless search for freedom" (93). Odinye therefore suggests that "the novel, *Tamara* deals with some social and moral issues which are woven around families in societies" (92).

Nkechi Nwoke in "The Girl Child and Trafficking in African Fiction…" avers that "Asika's *Tamara* portends the realism of the girl-child's abuse in the family and society" (4). Ifeanyi Okoye goes further to explain that "the novel denounces sexual exploitation and trafficking as a reaction to the unacceptable socioeconomic situation of Nigerian girls in particular and African girls, in general" (2). According to Chioma Kelue, "Asika has protested the relegation of the girl-child in a patriarchal setting" (7). Uchenna Mgbede observes that "Asika's use of assertive language is a significant feature of writings by African feminists who try to expose and protest against various sociocultural and traditional obstacles to the African girl's self-actualization" (1).

In conclusion, it is important to note that the concept of human rights in this study stems from the reality of the girl-child's experiences. Although the above reviewed critics have studied the selected novels using feminism as their theoretical framework to explore the experiences of the girl-child, they have failed to explore the psychic impact of gender-based violence on the growth and development of the girl protagonists. In essence, the researchers who have studied all the selected novels approached them as a feminist response to the oppressive condition of the female gender in society. Having reviewed the areas covered in the empirical studies, the researcher adopts the psychoanalytic theory with emphasis on the trauma theory in order to analyze the

mental and emotional consequences or negative effects of traumatic violent childhood experiences on the girl protagonists. The work also adopts different forms of African feminism to show how the male novelists explore the themes of violence and self-assertion as opposed to the female novelists.

CHAPTER THREE

DIMENSIONS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST THE GIRL-CHILD IN FEMALE SELECTED NOVELS

In this chapter, the novels of the selected female writers, Buchi Emecheta's *The Bride Price* (1976) and Yvonne Vera's *Under the Tongue* (1996) are analyzed. The above selected novels are investigated to ascertain the different kinds of gender-based violence (cultural, sexual, psychological) and their negative impact on the growth and development of the girl characters. The selected novelists' feminist consciousness enables the readers to contextualize authorial thoughts and feelings, while exposing them to see the various forms of violation of human rights and their consequences.

This chapter also analyzes how gender-based violence helps to construct the consciousness, choices and responses of the girl characters in the selected novels. It also examines the strategies employed by the girl characters to resist different patriarchal powers that inhibit their freedom and childhood. The analysis is thematically and theoretically explored.

CULTURAL VIOLENCE AGAINST THE GIRL-CHILD IN BUCHI EMECHETA'S *THE BRIDE PRICE*

Most African societies create cultural traditions that limit the growth and development of the girl-child. Thus, these limitations create experiences that can negatively affect the well-being of the girl-child. P. Freire sees these cultural limitations as "a systematic and deliberate form of action which operates upon the social structure, either with the objective of preserving that structure or of transforming it" (179).

In many African societies, the rights of the girl-child have been constantly undermined and subverted by cultural practices. Some of these cultural practices (gender discrimination and

stereotyping, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, and dowry-related issues) reduce her self-worth thereby causing emotional or psychological trauma. Children are trained to learn and assimilate the possible traits of their cultural milieux from childhood, but it is very discouraging that some of these cultural traditions have impinged on the rights of the girl-child with huge physical and psychological consequences. Hence, Agya Boakye-Baten asserts that "Africans need to examine critically their social structure, and that which militates against the development of decent childhood and child-rearing practices be eliminated" (114).

In literature, a significant feature of depicting oppressive female experiences by African writers is the call for change. According to Mojisola Shodipe, this call for change is expressed in fictional works in the "form of protest against various sociocultural and traditional obstacles that hinder the growth and self-actualization of the girl-child" (174). Kolawole in *Womanism and African Consciousness* therefore observes that Emecheta, as an African woman writer has the consciousness to situate the struggle of her girl protagonist within "African cultural realities by depicting her struggle against patriarchy and cultural subjugation" (34).

Emecheta creates a female character with a strong, positive and courageous disposition to increase the consciousness for the emancipation of the girl-child from patriarchal oppression and subjugation. In depicting this female consciousness, Emecheta engages the radical feminist ideology in her exploration of the girl-child's growth in consciousness and her assertiveness in the socio-cultural structures. She projects Aku-nna as a revolutionary female protagonist whose words and actions challenge patriarchal traditions and customs that have imprisoned the female gender over the years. To expose the psychological impact of male domination that confines girls and women into the culture of female domination, Emecheta projects Aku-nna as a character with "psychological disorientative behaviour who is driven by predilection to resist male

chauvinism" (197). It is therefore against this oppressive patriarchal background that Emecheta's *The Bride Price* is explored to see how far the novelist has raised a range of issues that obstruct girls' childhood. The novel is also examined to trace the growth and experiences that arise from embodied abusive treatment of the girl-child, as well as the anxieties created by cultural consciousness within the Ibuza community. Significantly, these cultural forms of violence are explored under subheadings such as gender inequality and male child syndrome, and forced marriage.

Gender Inequality and Male Child Syndrome

The term "gender", according to Okereke refers to "the biological given of sexuality – male or female" ("African Gender Myths…" 133). Susan Moller Okin goes further to define gender as "the deeply entrenched institutionalization of sexual differences" (2). Uchenna Ogonnaya and Eric Ndoma Besong also see gender as "the duty and task assigned to an individual based on the person's sex" (449). According to Ogonnaya and Besong, "it is the society that defines these roles" (449). In essence, gender is perceived as roles, behaviours and values a given society attributes to males and females. In line with the above views, Joan Wallach Scott asserts that "gender is a constitutive element in social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and it is the primary way of signifying relationships of power" (qtd in Okereke, "African Gender Myths…" 133).

In Buchi Emecheta's *The Bride Price*, gender inequality is deeply ingrained in the traditional customs and norms of the Ibuza Igbo community. These cultural traditions have indeed bastardized the basic human rights of freedom, equality, fairness and justice. The categorization of boys and girls creates social differences in society which results in inequality. Gloria Eme Worugji observes that "in Igbo custom, despite the general craving for children, the birth of boys

brings more happiness and unity in homes than that of girls" (137). Grace Eche Okereke and Itang Ede Egbung also observe that "in Africa, especially the traditional context, children are of great value and constitute the primary reason for marriage. But male children are valued more highly than female children because they secure the lineage through procreation, while the female children marry and leave their natal homes and are, therefore, seen as a loss to their families"(2059).

The reality of the above assertion is evident in *The Bride Price*. In Ezekiel Odia's household, the male child, Nna-nndo, is the child recognized by his father. This is seen in Ezekiel's quarrelsome attitude towards his wife, Ma Blackie. He often reminds his wife that after "paying heavy bride price on her head; he has only a son to show for it" (*The Bride Price* 9). Aku-nna on her own knows that she is "too insignificant to be regarded as a blessing to her parents' marriage. Not only that she is a girl, but she is much too thin for the approval of her parents" (*The Bride Price* 9). The above statement by Ezekiel is discriminative and demeaning to Aku-nna. It also buttresses the view that the Ibuza tradition creates social construction that places high premium on having male children which ultimately defines a married woman's acceptability in her cultural milieu. This assertion has to do with the way the female gender has been defined in Ibuza community. This is indeed gender stereotyping. In fact, the psychological and emotional torture that Aku-nna experiences are based on her sexuality – she is not valued because she is a girl. She is in every sense less that her male counterpart. The above social construction validates Aristotle's view that "the males are by nature superior, and the females inferior" (1130). This definition by Aristotle encourages male domination and discrimination against females in different contexts. In Ifi Amadiume's view, this male domination or discrimination is sex differentiation which suggests sex discrimination (113). This discrimination is what feminists are

vehemently resisting. Therefore, from the angle of feminism, both sexes must be given equal regard and treatment.

Emecheta further exposes and repudiates the traditional conventional practice of female discrimination and subjugation in the novel. During Ezekiel Odia's burial ceremony in Lagos, Aku-nna and Nna-nndo are the chief mourners. Their cries of grief are expected to be more than those of the other mourners, but Nna-nndo as a male child is singled out for special treatment. Grown-up men hold him to discourage him from crying to avoid hurting himself. Aku-nna is encouraged to continue crying, "because culturally women are supposed to exhibit more emotions" (*The Bride Price* 30). The above treatment indicates favouritism. Boys are culturally superior to girls regardless of their age. This treatment by Aku-nna's relatives and Ibuza kinsmen imposes on Aku-nna a feeling of being oppressed as a girl-child. The above act inflicts psychological pain on Aku-nna resulting in gender-based violence.

Male child syndrome manifests in the treatment given to boys over girls. In Ibuza community, the traditional beliefs do not subscribe to giving the girl-child the same privilege given to the boy-child. Boys are culturally pampered to enjoy their childhood, while girls are constantly tormented with the idea of giving up their childhood dreams to create a fertile ground for male superiority. This results to gender discrimination and female oppression. Auntie Matilda, a relative to Aku-nna's father represents one of the agents that suppresses the girl-child. During her condolence visit to Aku-nna in their one-room apartment in Lagos, Auntie Matilda articulates her feelings to Aku-nna:

> Can't you see that you have no father anymore? You are an orphan now, and you have to learn to take care of whatever clothes you have. Nobody is going to take care of whatever clothes you have. Nobody is going to buy you any more, until you marry. Then your husband will take care of you. (*The Bride Price* 38)

The above quotation depicts the oppression and discrimination of the girl-child in by relatives as a result of her sexuality. The distorted image of Aku-nna painted by Auntie Matilda is indeed a stereotyped image of the girl-child in African society. Walking in line with Auntie Matilda's ideological stance, Aku-nna cannot enjoy a certain degree of freedom after her father's death, because she is a girl who must rely on a man for survival. The above ideological stance indeed includes the existence of patriarchal realities which are psychologically oppressive to Aku-nna. Razinatu Mohammed rightly points out that Aku-nna's emotional plight is "not self-imposed psychological torture rather, the activities of other women have been examined as the root causes of such mental pains" (465).

The issue of male child syndrome also manifests in the preference given to boys over girls in the area of education. Emecheta in narrating Aku-nna's story suggests that denying the girl-child rights to education because of her gender is psychologically harmful. Grace C. Offorma explains that "education is a process through which the young acquires knowledge and realizes her potentialities and uses them for self-actualization, to be useful to herself and others" (4). Though the Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 1949 stipulates that "everyone has the right to education (qtd. in Offorma 4)", yet "parents tend to treat boys specially and care-givers tend to prefer that the girls take up routine environmental sanitation activities more than the boys who often are left to play as the girls work" (Amadi 151). Okereke and Egbung further observe that "there is a tacit cultural assumption in Africa that, in the face of lean resources, the girl child's education is sacrificed on the altar of her brother's" (2060). This is exactly what happens when Aku-nna's father dies leaving his family with no source of income. Auntie Matilda knows that Ma Blackie has no job in Lagos and cannot pay Aku-nna's school fees; therefore, she quickly adopts the

Ibuza cultural mentality of using marriage as an escape route for the girl-child in difficult situations. Auntie Matilda's oppressive statement, 'the pity of it all…is that they will marry her off very quickly in order to get enough money to pay Nna-nndo's school fees" (*The Bride Price*, 38) depicts the neglect of the girl-child and consequent abuse of her rights to education and overall development during childhood. Iloba, Okonkwo's first son also refuses to see the need of educating the girl-child. Iloba does not support Ma Blackie's decision of sending Aku-nna to school. This is evident in his statement: "why waste money on her? …. I would never do such a foolish thing as to pay for her schooling" (*The Bride Price* 74).

Gender inequality suppresses the girl-child to the extent that "she lacks the capacity to reason" (Ogonnaya and Besong 451). After her father's death, Aku-nna feels marginalized, oppressed and unequal with her brother, Nna-ndo. This places her as the "subordinate and Nna-ndo as the superior" (Uchem 89). Emecheta writes that, "Aku-nna knows that she has to marry, and that her bride price will help in settling Nna-ndo's school fees. Emecheta further explains, "Aku-nna did not mind that at least it would mean that she would be well fed. What she fears is the type of man who would be chosen for her" (*The Bride Price* 52). Aku-nna's thoughts align with Thomas Aquinas' definition of the female gender as "a defective and misbegotten male who must live under a man's influence" (1). Psychoanalysis would interpret Aku-nna's feelings of inadequacy and dependency on men as emotional castration from personal ambition to be educated. Aku-nna discovers that marriage would rob her of her dreams; she also knows that the oppressive forces from her new household (Okonkwo's family) have contributed to her lack of mental stability. Marriage therefore becomes an escape route injected into Aku-nna's unconscious so powerfully that she ends up desiring her own repression of her father's dream to train her in school."Aku-nna could only pray that her uncle – her new father as he would soon be – would allow her to

complete her Standard Six. Tears filled her eyes, and she quickly wiped them" … (*The Bride Price*, 66). However, Aku-nna is liberated from the oppressive conspiracy of Okonkwo's family when her mother (Ma Blackie) opts to train her in school despite all opposing views. Following the footsteps of Ma Blackie in the novel, Emecheta seems to protest the relegation of the girl-child in a patriarchal society. In essence, she depicts the antagonism of Okonkwo's family to react to the unacceptable condition of the girl-child in Nigeria, during the colonial period. Although most of Emecheta's female characters are traditional women who are not educated, she empowers the protagonist (Aku-nna) with the zeal to acquire education for self-development. According to Emecheta, this will help in raising her consciousness.

Gender discrimination and inequality are also discernable in some cultural observances recognizable in Ibuza cultural milieu. In *The Bride Price*, we are faced with the heroine's struggle to liberate herself from the clutches of a society that undermines her self-worth. At fifteen, Aku-nna understands that her state of being a girl-child is at the mercy of patriarchal control which can result to the violation of her rights. Aku-nna's understanding of the oppression of the girl-child in Ibuza community is articulated in her rhetorical questions at the onset of her menstruation:

> What would happen now? Would her people stop her going to school? The only thing she could do was to hide it, but how could she? The Ibuza women usually used rags which they changed frequently for freshness and washed several times a day – where would she dry hers without being seen? And when a woman was unclean, she must not go to the stream, she must not enter a household where the man of the family had either the "Eze" or "Alo" title …. (*The Bride Price*, 93)

The above dehumanizing patriarchal constitutions are ideologies that limit the female gender in society. These constitutions are oppressive and do not contribute positively to the development of the girl-child. In essence, the plight of Aku-nna and other girls in Ibuza indeed portrays the

stereotype that is hinged on the offensive patriarchal ideology. Gboyega Kolawole observes that girls and women "were expected to address their biological peculiarities such as menstruation, painful child labour, nurturing infants…. Some of the features above even trigger a higher degree of discrimination or repression against them because a process of menstruation or after birth… forces them to stay away from certain events that require purity" (13).

In fact, many oppressive cultural conditions such as stereotyping, gender inequality and forced marriage violate Aku-nna's fundamental human rights in *The Bride Price*. Based on the above view, Chitando observes that "patriarchal oppression results in the suffering of the girl-child" (17). Also, Aku-nna's inability to further her education is part of the patriarchal oppressive ideology that limits female growth and self-actualization. Chitando lends voice to the above view by stating that "social development is retarded when girls are prevented from engaging in meaningful pursuits" (17). Kolawole therefore states that "such varying degrees of subjugation were believed to be her destiny, this probably being the reason that the anomaly of gender discrimination was not attended to for a long time because it had become part of most culture" (13).

In *The Bride Price*, Aku-nna is affected psychologically, because the onset of her menstrual cycle means the end of her education which must be sacrificed on the altar of marriage. Okonkwo's disposition to marry Aku-nna off at the start of her menstrual cycle bruises Aku-nna's self-esteem and emotional attachment to education. Aku-nna is devastated by misery, and she insists on attaining her dream by hiding the onset of her menstrual cycle. Aku-nna becomes defensive and pushes the ideal towards the full expression of her potential. Aku-nna's demonstration of her assertiveness is a major ingredient of feminism. She hides her new experience in defiance of a society that wants to crush her dreams and limit her potential.

There seems to be a gender gap in Ibuza community; all members of the society are not treated equally. In *The Bride Price,* the culture of allowing boys to fiddle with, romance and squeeze a girl's breast once she starts experiencing her monthly menstrual cycle whether she approves it or not, is indeed an act of violence which violates her human rights. According to the ominiscient narrator, "their custom allowed this. Boys would come into your mother's hut and play at squeezing a girl's breasts until they hurt; the girl was supposed to try as much as possible to ward them off and not be bad tempered about it. So long as it was done inside the hut where an adult was near, and so long as the girl did not let the boy go too far, it was not frowned on"(*The Bride Price* 97).

In *The Bride Price*, Emecheta explores the humiliating action of exploiting young girls as sexual tools for boys' emotional pleasure. Aku-nna, the protagonist of the novel expresses her grief over the inhuman attitude towards her. In the party organized to celebrate the onset of menstruation, girls are not allowed to wear blouses so that their male visitors can play around with their breasts. During this party, Aku-nna wears a pink blouse to hide her breasts from men like Okoboshi who limps as a result of snake bite. Timothy Chunga observes that "a trend of the suffering of the girl-child is common. Girl-children always lack a support base from people as close as their family members. Therefore, there seems to be a general notion that girls can only be portrayed under conditions where unpleasant things are done to them. They are always portrayed as passive members of society who do not take a lead in anything. When they do so they are just catalysts and not agents" (32). We are meant to see the abusive behaviour of Okoboshi who harasses Aku-nna sexually – "he walked up to Aku-nna 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, 120). By depicting sexual exploitation, Emecheta seems to suggest that sexuality is used as a subject of oppression.

Emecheta's vision of women as betrayers of others is unmitigated by glimpses of betrayal and devotion which denote gender inequality and subjugation. Ma Blackie, Aku-nna's mother is very conscious of the psychological and emotional consequences of the girl-child's plight in the patriarchal Ibuza community, but chooses to ignore her daughter's complaints against patriarchal modes of oppression. Aku-nna reports Okoboshi's inhuman attitude to her mother – "mother, Aku-nna begged, please don't say anything. Okoboshi was hurting me; he was…. Mother, look at my new blouse! He tore it, he was so rough. He was wicked-oh, mother please listen…" (*The Bride Price* 121). The dramatic hushing of Aku-nna by her mother provokes her anger. Despite Aku-nna's pleas and explanations, her mother abuses her emotionally defending Okoboshi's dehumanizing behaviour. The narrator explains that Ma Blackie waves aside her pleas and cautions:

> 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 houses, because they cannot endure open play, so they go to secret places and have themselves disvirgined. Is this the type of person you are turning out to be? I will kill you if you bring shame and dishonor on us. How can he hurt you with all these others watching? And yet you allow a common… (*The Bride Price*, 121)

Razinatu Mohammed makes an important observation about the act of oppressing the girl-child. According to him, 'the oppression or subjugation of the girl-child starts in the home and the mother is seen as a tool of patriarchy against her daughter' (466). Charles C. Fongchingong futher observes that Emecheta "traces gender inequality in the Igbo society as hinging on the tenets of gender socialization process, customary and traditional practices" (139). This explains

why Emecheta imbues her major character with radical rebellious traits to confront and rebel Ibuza taboos, norms and superstitious beliefs that bind the female gender in chains.

In conclusion, the Ibuza community has a very high level of gender inequality which is blamed on its patriarchal structure. Indeed, male chauvinism has forced the Ibuza cultural milieu to disregard the basic rights of the girl-child making her unequal with her male counter in the areas of gender roles, inheritance, education, marriage, sexuality and nurturing. This infringement on Aku-nna's rights thus constitutes the most demeaning moments of her life which pushes her on the journey to self-assertion and actualization.

Forced Marriage

Emecheta has not only been occupied with the challenges of female sexuality but has also been preoccupied with the problem of oppressive forced marriage as an instrument of patriarchal subjugation. To Emecheta, culture and tradition are oftentimes agencies of forced marriages. In line with the above view, Chukwuma in "The Face of Eve" states that "tradition stipulates that the girl child's crown and status are mainly linked to marriage…" (107). This concern is buttressed by Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie who identifies "traditional structures as one of the mountains on the back of the African girl-child" (*Recreating Ourselves.*… 11). Therefore, in Emecheta's novel, the immanent state of girl-child's entrapment is embodied in forced marriage or abduction and the bride price (expensive dowry). Hence, her curbed freedom of choice, discrimination and stereotype unveil the actuality of her oppression.

Oftentimes, the girl-child is helpless in the face of cultural subjugation. She is subjected to situations that have emotional and psychological implications. Indeed, these oppressive principles are insulting to the female gender and hang on her neck like an albatross. In the novel,

Emecheta seems to have been stimulated to raise burning questions about the condition of the girl-child – "for was she not a girl? A girl belonged to you today as your daughter, and tomorrow, before your very eyes, would go to another man in marriage. To such creatures, one should be wary of showing too much love and care, otherwise people would ask, 'look, man, are you going to be your daughter's husband as well?" (*The Bride Price* 17). Psychoanalysis would interpret the above submissions by Emecheta as a form of castration. The girl-child is "physically and emotionally castrated" (Eagleton 134) from birth. She has no real ownership of herself. This thus results to feelings of inadequacy and dependency on men for survival. We become intensely aware of Aku-nna's inner conflicts through the above rhetorical questions. Throughout the novel, Aku-nna becomes entangled in finding a solution to her inner conflicts and her all-pervasive feelings of powerlessness over her gender, forced marriage issues and cultural norms. This suggests that girls are trapped in a culturally-instituted patriarchal marriage ideology which limits their full rights as members of a given society.

In *The Bride Price*, Aku-nna like other Ibuza girls is a victim of forced marriage. At fifteen, after the death of her father, she has been constantly pressurized and psychologically oppressed by her relatives to get married in order to find enough resources that would aid in nurturing Nna-ndo, her younger brother. She is threatened of being sold off to men by family members and relatives. Elaine Showalter vividly points out that in "patriarchal societies low premium is placed on women and female children, whereas to sell a son would constitute a drastic violation of patriarchal culture" ("The Unmanning…" 146). Showalter's view reflects in Auntie Uzo's statement concerning Aku-nna's marriage: "She will gladden the heart of an educated man, you mark my words. Most girls from Lagos are very quickly married away to rich and educated men because of their smooth bodies and their schooling" (*The Bride Price*, 38).

Indeed, Aku-nna's mind has been prepared to accept her fate as a girl. She is destined to be owned and controlled by men. Rose Ure Mezu notes that as "a child, Aku-nna does not mind belonging to the father to whom she feels bound by, a kind of closeness to which she could not give name" (134). Mezu goes further to suggest that "in Emecheta's worldview, all men — husbands, fathers, and brothers — are slave masters and tyrannical oppressors; the only option open to women is to choose the lesser of all these evils" (143). The above views are indeed a true reflection of Aku-nna's situation.

In *The Bride Price,* there is the inability of the Ibuza traditional society to treat all the citizens equally in matters relating to marriage. Girls' rights to freedom of choice are ignored and suppressed by Ibuza law and custom. Girls are forced into marriage, while boys are given the freedom to live their lives without societal stereotypical pressure. In the novel, Okonkwo wishes to take a higher title, (Eze title) because "his sights are already set on his brother's wife, his brother's property, and the bride price his brother's daughter would fetch" (*The Bride Price*, 72). Okonkwo plans to marry Aku-nna and Ogugua, his biological daughter, off to men in order to take his Obi title. He cunningly allows Aku-nna to be trained in school by her mother, Ma Blackie, despite agitations from his other wives and children. Indeed, Okonkwo has a secret agenda – he covets Aku-nna's bride price. Okonkwo confesses, "I won't mind if Aku-nna fetches us such a large sum. I could do with some money" (*The Bride Price* 76).

As a young girl, Aku-nna understands that the patriarchal social structure devalues daughters in Ibuza society through forced marriage and excessive greed for expensive bride price. This leads to castration from childhood freedom and personal dreams. The bond between Aku-nna and her father is motivated by the bride price he would collect on her behalf. This amounts to his dreams

of yielding expensive bride price from an educated daughter. Aku-nna on her part is equally grateful for having such a rare opportunity of being trained in school by her father, since girls' education is inherently opposed and treated with traditional bias. The opportunity to acquire formal education creates a special bond between Aku-nna and her father. This type of bond between Aku-nna and her father suggests "Freud's account of the girl's process of Oedipalization which is not separable from sexism" (Eagleton 134). According to Eagleton,

> The little girl, perceiving that she is inferior because 'castrated', turns in disillusionment from similarly 'castrated' mother to the project of seducing her father; but since this project is doomed, she must finally turn back reluctantly to the mother, effect an identification with her, assume feminine gender role, and unconsciously substitute for the penis which she envies but can never possess a baby, which she desires to receive from the father. (135)

Aku-nna, like other girls and women in Ibuza community is castrated by Ibuza patriarchal tradition and figureheads. She is relegated to the background and only valuable in the issues of bride price and marriage. This explains why Aku-nna turns her object of love, from her mother to her father and finally to her prospective husband. Aku-nna's love for her father stems from the opportunity given to her to acquire education. Her interest in her prospective husband is hinged on the cultural dependency on men "which confines the female child to a life of economic dependency as well as a life of servitude in marriage relationship" (Ogwude 173). Culturally, the female child assumes the same role like her mother, doing house chores, giving birth and nurturing both the man and the children. The above process of Freud's Oedipalization stipulates the structure of relations by which we come to be the men and women we are. It also signals "transition from pleasure principle to reality principle; from the enclosure of the family to the society at large" (Eagleton 135). In fact, this process of Oedipalization is a deliberate way of subjugating and castrating the female gender as well as creating a dominant class. The term,

'castration' is very important in understanding the process of Oedipalization. Castration denotes the "act of removing power from a person. Freud's idea of castration places the girl-child as an inferior personality" that has no rightful ownership to herself and others (Eagleton 134).

Emecheta's literary achievement is dedicated to depicting the female gender as "real in quest for selfhood, for realization" (Oko 7). Aku-nna's quest for selfhood and liberation forces her to conceal the onset of her menstruation to her family – "she knows the responsibility that goes with it. 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* 92). The path to painful maturity which Aku-nna treads is strewn with physical and emotional challenges. Aku-nna is afraid of being limited or restricted by oppressive marriage. It is Aku-nna's thoughts about the negative consequences of menstruation on the development of the girl-child that provide the readers with most of the oppressive cultural tradition. To Aku-nna, "marriage becomes a social system that confines girls into acceptable modes of obedience to men …" (Chiluwa 68). Aku-nna's secret is exposed in her third menstrual cycle when she is with her friends in the forest cutting firewood. This new revelation exposes her to various conflicts and emotional trauma that change her life forever. On the surface of things, it seems Emecheta stumbles on Aku-nna's emotional struggle for survival after the abrupt decision to organize a traditional party that would celebrate her maturity and usher her into forced marriage. It is not surprising, therefore, that there are discernible tendencies in Aku-nna towards her thoughts and the limitations imposed by the reality of her circumstances. These limitations lend her the inspiration to fight for her rights and fuel her consciousness.

The story of Aku-nna in no way depicts an ideal childhood. Childhood is that stage in life where freedom exists under the guidance of adults; yet in Aku-nna's situation, childhood experiences become a tunnel which channels emotional and psychological pain, especially the pain of being forced into early marriage that will impinge on her development. Thus, in depicting Aku-nna's experiences, a strong tension exists between childhood and forced adulthood; the abrupt changes that Aku-nna experiences obscure the reality of her childhood to the extent that she cannot maintain a critical stance in her life. For Aku-nna, childhood harbours a painful memory of exploitation and abuse that could follow her into adulthood. In depicting the assertive nature of Aku-nna's struggle, Emecheta suggests that some cultural societies prey on childhood innocence as they prey on the unsuspecting innocence of girl-children. Hence, girls become unprotected and vulnerable under the care of those who should have protected them.

The girl-child experiences a great deal of oppression in society; if she is not asked to go through the tradition of forced marriage, she is kidnapped or subjected to the obnoxious tradition of 'isi muo', a tradition which supports young men "who have no money to pay for a bride to sneak out of the bush to cut a curl from a girl's head so that she would belong to them for life (*The Bride Price,* 103). Chitando maintains that "patriarchal oppression results in the suffering of the girl-child. Therefore, social development is retarded when girls are prevented from engaging in meaningful pursuits" (26). T. Ngoshi goes further to observe that "girls are married off too early in their lives such that they are robbed of the pleasures of youthful femininity" (245).

The major tensions in *The Bride Price* are sustained by the theme of forced marriage or abduction. In depicting the experiences of Aku-nna, Emecheta explores the motif of marriage as a form of slavery for the girl-child. Yet many societies, primarily in Africa, continue to support

the idea that girls should marry at or soon after puberty without considering the physical, health, emotional or psychological implications. Forced marriage or kidnapping is one of the practices that violates the rights of the girl-child. In this context, the custom of early marriage is acknowledged as one of the reasons for girls' exclusion from school, especially in Ibuza cultural settings where girls are raised for a lifetime confined to household occupations and are expected to marry very young. Chukwuma's assertion affirms the above thus:

> The female character in African fiction hitherto, is a facile lack-lustre human being, the quiet member of a household…. In the home, she is not part of the decision-making both as a daughter, wife and mother even when the decisions affect her directly. Docility and complete subsumation of will is demanded from her. ("The Face of Eve" 131)

Emecheta has not only been occupied with the issues of oppressive early forced marriage as an instrument of patriarchal subjugation, but has also been preoccupied with the challenges of female sexuality. In *The Bride Price*, Aku-nna is kidnapped one night during a dance rehearsal by the Okoboshi Obidi family. Twelve men rush into the room where her sisters and cousins are practicing for a community festival; after finding Aku-nna, the Obidi men throw her over their shoulders and take her into the forest. According to the narrator:

> What was a girl to do in a predicament of this sort? There was no use in struggling. There must be at least twelve of these men, all running, running and breathing hard. So this was to be the end of her dreams. After everything, she was nothing but a common native girl kidnapped into being a bride. The realization was so painful, and the men carrying her moved so rapidly, swinging her from one shoulder to another, that a kind of dizziness overcame Akunna. Nature has a way of defending her own: when a pain becomes too much to bear, you lose consciousness. This was what happened to her. When she arrived at her new home in Umueze, Akunna was a limp bride in need of revival. (*The Bride Price* 126)

Aku-nna is unable to repulse this humiliation on her personality. In the novel, Emecheta cannot deny the encroachment of traditional culture into the freedom of the girl-child. Her visionary

perception in exposing the problem of abduction or early forced marriage shows that she is not silent on the issue. Through the character of Iloba, Emecheta stresses that the structural system of female harassment underpinned by patriarchy should be abolished because it is outmoded. Iloba confesses: “One would have believed that we were all civilized now, and that this kind of thing had stopped happening” … (*The Bride Price* 132). Disagreement and hostility are the result of this kind of man’s inhumanity against the girl-child. Anger swells up in the raging hearts of Okonkwo’s family while searching for Aku-nna. Iloba and all Okonkwo’s other sons plan to kidnap and cut locks of hair from the heads of all the girls in the family that is responsible for this outrage against their half-sister. The forced marriage bruises Okonkwo’s family. They become very hostile and are ravaged by misery and disillusionment.

In exploring abduction as a form of forced marriage, we are also made to see the abnormality of such an act in society. Early the next morning, three elders from Obidi family inform Okonkwo, Aku-nna’s step-father, that she is now married to their son, Okoboshi. Even though Okonkwo is perturbed about what has happened, he reluctantly accepts the minimal bride price offered for his western-educated step-daughter. The omniscient narrator speaks: “there was nothing Okonkwo could do. They brought more gin to dull his senses, and a minimal amount was agreed upon as the bride price for Aku-nna. After all, she was just like any other girl. All this modern education did nothing good for any woman; to say the very least, it made her too proud” (*The Bride Price*, 133). Aku-nna is indeed deprived of her very identity in life, for so fundamental is a girl’s freedom of choice in any situation.

Emecheta through the actions depicted in the novel stresses that forced marriages could be achieved through rape or forced sexual intercourse as one of the observed cultural practices. According to the Ibuza tradition, once a girl is disvirgined by any man, the girl automatically

becomes a bride to the man without punishing the man who commits the crime of rape. The family of the girl has no power over what has befallen their daughter and is compelled to accept her fate without agitating. When Aku-nna is kidnapped by the Okoboshi's family, her family searches for her and bemoans her fate. The narrator explains that "even as they were doing all this, they knew it was useless. Aku-nna had gone. All the man responsible had to do was cut a curl of her hair-"isi nmo" – and she would belong to him for life. Or he could force her into sleeping with him, and if she refused his people would assist him by holding her down until she was disvirgined. And when that had been done, no other person would want her anymore. It was a shame…" (*The Bride Price* 132).

Okoboshi's sister also confirms the above cultural practice by warning Aku-nna to willingly sleep with her brother without being stubborn, because "Okoboshi would only have to call for help and all those drunken men would come in and help him hold her legs apart so that he could enter her with no further trouble. The men would not be blamed at all, because it was their custom and also because Okoboshi had a bad foot" (*The Bride Price* 135).

The above oppressive cultural tradition pushes Aku-nna's assertive nature to the fore as she fights against patriarchal Ibuza tenets which support rape as a way of forcefully having the consent of the girl-child. The protagonist, Aku-nna, devices a new plan to free herself from the humiliating experience that is capable of giving her perpetual trauma. She is a girl pushed to the wall and on the slippery path of revolution against her oppressors. She is thus forced to assume a feminist fight since her fundamental rights have been violated. Aku-nna is not ready to face frustration, debasement, physical and emotional pain arising from forced marriage and sexual intercourse as Okoboshi violently pushes her on the bed. According to the narrator:

> She kicked him in the chest, he slapped her very hard, and she could smell the gin on his breath. She knew she could not overpower him. The slap had been painful and she was

> bleeding inside her mouth. Tears of desolation flowed from her eyes as he knelt over her, untying his lappa with shaky hands. If she was hoping for mercy and understanding, she was not going to get it from this man. He was too bitter. (*The Bride Price* 138).

Aku-nna's rebellion fuels her struggle for freedom. Emecheta's concept of feminism is radical and necessary in achieving freedom for the girl-child. The reason for the fight points to the fact that Emecheta understands that African girls and women enjoy a low degree of freedom in the pre-colonial Igbo society. In essence, Aku-nna's refusal to remain caged by the patriarchal traits spells true radicalism. To Emecheta, it is very difficult not to become hostile in the face of an oppressive situation. As a result, Aku-nna "refuses the passivity man means to impose on her" (De Beauvoir 718). By depicting Aku-nna's struggles and revolt against patriarchal forces, Emecheta reveals her level of consciousness towards self-actualization and emancipation.

Female Assertiveness as a Strategy for Emancipation in *The Bride Price*

Self-assertiveness is a feminist ideal that has been brought about by the subjugation and oppression of the female gender. Emecheta is a radical feminist who demands total equality of rights with men in society. She is a feminist in her insistence that there is no unity between the oppressor, (the male gender) and the oppressed, (the female gender). This is seen in her sharp and bitter hatred for men who inflict physical and emotional pain on girls in her novel.

The main character in Emecheta's *The Bride Price* is indeed overwhelmed by oppressive cultural conditions that limit her rights as a human being. Aku-nna is oppressed through patriarchal traditional practices that encourage rape, forced early marriage and discrimination against the female gender. Emecheta equips her protagonist with oratorical skills as a strategy for female emancipation. These skills are feminist tools that give Aku-nna the freedom to decide her destiny and obtain freedom from society's oppressive restrictions. To stop Okoboshi from committing

the inhuman act of rape, Aku-nna lies that she has been disvirgined by her teacher and best friend, Chike Ofulue. Aku-nna insults Okoboshi: “look at you, and shame on you. Okoboshi the son of Obidi! You say your father is a chief--dog chief, that is what he is, if the best he can manage to steal for his son is a girl who has been taught what men taste like by a slave”(*The Bride Price* 138). Aku-nna’s false confession however infuriates Okoboshi who calls her names and refuses to touch her. Aku-nna’s feminist oratorical skill achieves the desired result because it helps to ignite Okoboshi’s hatred for her, thereby saving her from rape and forced marriage. Aku-nna’s false revelation forces Okoboshi to confess his state of mind:

> If you really want to know, Okoboshi concluded, I was not too keen on you anyway. My father wanted you simply to get even with his enemy Ofulue, your slave lover’s father. So you are not a virgin! That will be the greatest fun of it all. You will remain my wife in name, but in a few months I shall marry the girl of my choice and you will have to fetch and carry for her and for my subsequent wives. Get out of my bed, you public bitch! (*The Bride Price* 139)

To further retaliate, Okoboshi spreads the rumour that Aku-nna has been defiled by a common slave, Chike Ofulue. This further demoralizes Aku-nna and her family. In Okoboshi’s family, Aku-nna is humiliated and ostracized as if she has committed a sacrilege. Amidst the raging rumour, Aku-nna is given an old lappa like a young widow by Okoboshi’s family to scorn and humiliate her before the villagers. The above act by Okoboshi’s family appears to be a strategy to oppress the girl-child and frustrate her emotionally. Indeed, Emecheta encourages rebellious and independent tendencies in her protagonist. The craving for emancipation pushes Aku-nna to take a drastic action. She escapes from Okoboshi’s house and elopes with the love of her life, Chike, to Asaba and marries him without the official bride price being paid.

Significantly, Emecheta’s protagonist (Aku-nna) fights and insults her oppressor (Okoboshi) to stop him from committing the act of rape. She indeed challenges patriarchal tradition and

customs by marrying a slave (Chike Ofulue). Aku-nna's act is a revolutionary act against patriarchal oppression and subjugation of the girl-child. Aku-nna chooses total rebellion because she has been so oppressed. She rebels against Okoboshi and the Ibuza cultural mores because she wants to fight for her honour. In psychoanalysis, the *ego* is the most central part of the mind that mediates with one's environment. The *ego* is ever under the control of the *id* in order to expose the reality of human experiences. Aku-nna's *ego* operates according to the pleasure principle which focuses on her instinctual drive and desire for *eros*. In this act of rebellion, *eros* signifies the life instinct that pushes Aku-nna to engage in life-sustaining decisions. This also explains why Aku-nna adopts revolutionary aggressiveness of the superego as the only way to escape the tyrannical patriarchal powers and achieve her freedom. This superego is what Eagleton calls "the unruly, insubordinate unconscious" (136).

According to Eagleton "the Freudian superego is thought as the source of punitive, approving and idealizing attitudes towards the self" (136). In *The Bride Price*, Aku-nna's superego is, of course, separate from the cultural superego. Her superego rebellion or aggression is directed against the Ibuza patriarchal mores and figureheads. Indeed, Aku-nna's operative feelings in this unconscious rebellion is externalized and displayed in her act of elopement with the son of a slave. On the level of psychoanalytical interpretation of Aku-nna's plight, it is important to note that the sole function of the superego is to induce guilt and to repress. It is therefore, Aku-nna's recognition of repressed dreams or wishes that produces extreme anxiety or fear.

Emecheta's heroine (Aku-nna) is depicted as a girl who engages in revolutionary struggle for freedom and self-actualization in a patriarchal traditional setting. Aku-nna's oppression is traced to her childhood experiences which take the readers through different phases of her struggle for

emancipation. In essence, Emecheta traces the oppressive conditions that inhibit the physical, moral, psychological, or social development and growth of her girl character from childhood to forced maturity. Indeed, these oppressive conditions subjugate Aku-nna and leave her psychologically depressed.

It is observed that Aku-nna as a girl-child has developed an ego or individual identity, a particular place in the sexual, familial and social networks by splitting off guilty desires, repressing them into the unconscious. Therefore, Aku-nna as a human subject who emerges from Oedipal process is a "split subject, torn precariously between conscious and unconscious" (Eagleton 136). Consequently, Aku-nna uses all the aggressiveness in her psyche to fight against patriarchal oppression, thus moving beyond the level of ego and superego. In fact, her hatred for patriarchal oppression does not allow the "guilt-producing superego" to deliberate on the consequences of her quest for self-pleasure; but one thing is clear – the unconscious can always return to plague her (Eagleton 136).

Eagleton observes that in the midst of patriarchal laws, the girl-child begins to form what Freud calls "superego, the awesome, punitive voice of conscience…" (136). Aku-nna consciously rebels against Oedipal guilt (depression), patriarchal tradition and castrations to escape from family and traditional forces that hinder her happiness. She decides to follow her heart in direct opposition to the Ibuza social and cultural norms. Aku-nna aggressively challenges the Oedipal guilt, Ibuza cultural norms, and the constant castration of her dreams to the extent that she is left with the option of making a total disconnection from her family and Ibuza tyrannical customs.

Emecheta represents Aku-nna's rebellion as an inward tragic event, reinforced by her family's hostility towards her choice of man and the oppressive patriarchal norms of Ibuza community. In

fact, the psychic energies of Ibuza superstitious norms violate and destroy Aku-nna's psychic wholeness, fragmenting and ultimately dissolving her personality. One thing is very clear – Aku-nna seeks for *eros*, a self-surviving instinct for self-fulfilment. In Aku-nna herself, hate for oppressive cultural norms and rebellion against oppressive forces are consuming passions; the deep movement of superego aggression motivates the rebellion which carries Aku-nna to her death. Aku-nna's choice of a man, "an Osu" is indeed a challenge to the Oedipal figureheads; an attempt to defy Oedipal norms that militate against her pleasure principles.

Towards the end of the novel, there is a death instinct in Aku-nna in which her aggression is resolved and guilt displayed. This assertion proves Aku-nna's plight; ultimately, she lacks the needed courage to resist the mythical cultural beliefs or taboos of the Ibuza community. Therefore, emotional torture as a result of unpaid bride price and Okonkwo's fetish behaviour towards her heighten the Oedipal guilt that makes Aku-nna psychologically depressed. Okonkwo divorces Aku-nna's mother out of frustration and makes a fetish image of Aku-nna in his personal altar to torment her spirit and pull her back home. The concept of Oedipal guilt is a clear indication that Emecheta's radical feminist ideology of liberation consists of denying her protagonist a complete emotional independence from the patriarchal kingship traits.

Aku-nna becomes melancholic and entertains fear that without the traditional bride price being paid something evil is bound to happen to her during childbirth. These thoughts saturate Aku-nna's mind and leave her psychologically depressed and unhappy. Oedipal guilt overwhelms her whole system and pushes her to rebel against her family through her act of elopement with an *Osu* lover. To make matters worse, Chike's offer of fifty pounds as Aku-nna's bride price is rejected by Okonkwo who curses him for ruining her step-daughter. This new development further weighs Aku-nna down; she becomes so sick physically, and mentally unable to cope or

escape this Oedipal guilt. Mezu observes that “Freud would interpret Aku-nna's melancholia as a disease of the superego or conscience, a pathological counterpart of mourning” (134).

At sixteen, Aku-nna becomes pregnant with Chike’s baby. She loses appetite and becomes malnourished as a result of her traumatic emotional condition. Aku-nna’s trauma is evoked under conditions that create anxiety. She is traumatized because her bride price has not been paid. The Ibuza tradition has played on the psyche of the Ibuza female citizens through a psychologically manipulated thought of death during childbirth. Anxiety overwhelms Aku-nna who becomes afraid of staying alone in the house. She becomes mentally unstable and unable to repress her fears. Aku-nna becomes neurotic about her situation, because she is told that Okonkwo has placed her carved image in his traditional altar to call her spirit back from Ughelli through the wind. As a trauma character, Aku-nna experiences constant nightmares and hallucinations – “over and over again, she heard this voice calling her, telling her she must come back to her family, to her people” (*The Bride Price* 163). Aku-nna’s mental condition is caused by her inability to repress the fear she has about Ibuza taboos and superstitious tales. This fear leads to nightmares and hysterical screams that often leave her unconscious at night (*The Bride Price* 164).

In the novel, Aku-nna experiences constant mood swings. Her mental state is strongly linked to post-traumatic stress disorder. Caruth in *Trauma: Explorations in memory* sees this disorder “as a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event”…(3). Aku-nna is indeed unable to actively repress her fears – “her fears persisted, so much so that she had begun to call out in her brief phases of sleep. She would suddenly wake up in the night, covered

in perspiration, begging Chike to please hold her because somebody, her uncle, was trying to take her away" (*The Bride Price* 163).

Aku-nna adopts repression as a strategy for escaping male oppression. In Aku-nna's situation, the act of dissociation occurs just as the trauma is occurring. Aku-nna's mental state is not caused by active repression; her constant anxiety over her condition distorts her thoughts and leaves her psychologically damaged. Aku-nna suffers from insomnia and subsequently becomes amnestic making it totally impossible for her to survive childbirth. Janet Pierre notes that "once a trauma survivor has adapted the concept of dissociation and sees her fate in somebody else's, then, she has developed separate identities" (qtd. in Schmid 3).

This is the condition in which Aku-nna finds herself. She believes that her fate is controlled by Okonkwo, the patriarchal figurehead of her family to the extent that she becomes detached from the reality of her problem. The authorial third-person point of view links the protagonist's neurotic state to the societal pressure which revolves around the negative consequences of unpaid bride price during childbirth. According to the narrator, 'anyone who contravened was better dead. If you tried to hang on to life, you would gradually be helped towards death by psychological pressures' (*The Bride Price*, 141). But, then Aku-nna's fears, unfortunately, come to be realized – especially her fear of dying during childbirth. Aku-nna suffers a lot of mental anguish and dies in her knowledge of the patriarchal myth that punishes female offenders for flouting traditional customs. Aku-nna becomes so neurotic because of the Oedipal-guilt that she never recovers from her schizophrenic split. In fact, Aku-nna's mission of rebelling against Oedipus figureheads and symbols (Okonkwo, Okoboshi, the Ibuza customs/ beliefs, castration and guilt) leads to a total breakdown of her psyche and body.

Aku-nna's rebellion or strategy for survival fails because she is incapable of completing her struggle for life instinct. She succumbs to Oedipal guilt and becomes subjugated. She moves into the level of preconscious and is unable to fight her death instinct. Indeed, the desire to resist patriarchal forces completely eludes her. In fact, Aku-nna's pathologic condition fits into what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari see as a "process of deterritorialization" (363). This is simply because, she cannot control her mind and actions again. She dies as a psychological victim of Ibuza cultural myths and superstitious beliefs. The omniscient narrator acknowledges the fact that "every girl in Ibuza after Aku-nna's death was told her story, to reinforce the old taboos of the land" (*The Bride Price* 168). This is indeed, the way patriarchial hegemony has psychological hold on the girl-child to perpetually oppress and subjugate her.

Aku-nna's rebellion is radical and western in ideaology. This act of rebellion is directly linked to Emecheta's "real life experience when she defied her family tradition and rejected the man chosen for her by elders in her family" (Umeh, "Introduction…" 2). Like Aku-nna, Emecheta "too eloped with her classmate, Nduka Onwordi, and did not have a traditional Igbo marriage ceremony with all the blessings from family members and friends in their village" (Umeh, "Introduction…" 2).

The Bride Price has an unhappy ending like Emecheta's love story. Emecheta's bride price was not paid because her husband could not afford the money her family demanded. Her husband, Sylvester, felt humiliated that she likened him to an outcast because he had been unable to pay her family bride price. Marie Umeh explains that "Sylvester destroyed the only copy of Emecheta's novel to prevent public exposure of their marital affair" ("Introduction…" 3). Her husband's mean act forces her to give the novel an unhappy ending. Umeh further explains that

"Aku-nna's guilty conscience, poor health, and anxiety from traumatic village experiences precipate a nervous breakdown which ultimately leads to her premature death" (Umeh "Introduction…" 3). Aku-nna's mental breakdown also mirrors Emecheta's "depression caused by her failed marriage, which ended in divorce" (Umeh "Introduction…"3). Despite life's challenges, Emecheta has remained "courageous and more mature in handling her problems", but in *The Bride Price,* Aku-nna's immaturity exposes her to Oedipal destructive powers of guilt (Emechet *Head Above Water* 4). Emecheta accepts that the tragic ending of the novel is a result of her failed marriage and rebellion against the patriarchal figureheads in her family. Emecheta seems to have noticed the huge consequences of the Oedipal guilt she has imbued her protagonist with. In her autobiography, *Head Above Water*, she emphatically states her opinion about her stance on cultural norms, feminist radicalism and consciousness. She confesses:

> I had grown wiser since that manuscript. I had realized that what makes all of us human is belonging to a group. And if one belongs to a group, one should try and abide by its laws. If one could not abide by the group's law, then one is an outsider, a radical, someone different who had found a way of living and being happy outside the group. Aku-nna was too young to do all that. She had to die. (166)

From the foregoings, we can rightly say that Freud's psychoanalysis finds interpretative relevance in Emecheta's *The Bride Price*. Indeed, Emecheta's novel serves as a rich model for the application of the principles of psychoanalysis, because it contains dominant symbols, images and concepts that help us to capture the conscious and unconscious acts of the girl protagonist. In Emecheta's fictional world, fathers, family and the Ibuza culture are captured as agencies of power termed 'Oedipus'. Therefore, the above figureheads are metaphorically represented as the Oedipus figureheads. Significantly, while analyzing *The Bride Price,* Oedipal guilt is found to be the main cause of neurosis in Aku-nna who becomes guilt-plagued and inert. This explains why Aku-nna succumbs to the neurotic consequences of living. Therefore, this

study sees Freud's psychoanalysis as Oedipal and non-therapeutic when applied to Emecheta's *The Bride Price* since Aku-nna, the girl protagonist died in her neurotic state.

SEXUAL ABUSE AGAINST THE GIRL CHILD IN YVONNE VERA'S *UNDER THE TONGUE*

In Yvonne Vera's *Under the Tongue*, the theme of rape is weaved in the story of a ten year old Zhizha, the heroine of the novel. In the novel, Vera depicts the plights of the female gender, especially the girl-child during the Zimbabwe's civil war (guerilla war) which was characterized by violence of different forms. During the guerilla war, girls and women are constantly raped. This act of rape becomes a major concern for Vera because it violates the rights of the girl-child.

Significantly, the rights of the girl-child to her body and freedom of choice have raised a hot debate in the discourse of human rights. Patriarchy and male jingoistic attitudes towards the female gender seem to have encouraged the violation of the girl child's rights. Despite several sexual orientations and gender identity rights awareness created in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the girl child's rights are constantly violated in many cultural milieux. Hence, this section examines rape as a form of human rights violation in Yvonne Vera's *Under the Tongue*.

In most African societies, rape is one of the most common forms of violence against the girl child. This violates articles 1 and 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) which stipulates that all human beings irrespective of colour, origin, sex and background have equal rights and should be treated with dignity. Since rape violates human rights through forceful claim of the body, cruelty or other inhuman treatment, then, it should be considered as an act of violence which is undignified and destructive to the growth of the girl-child. Rape is a crime of control and violence which causes "trauma or physical and psychological damage to the victim"

(Pederson 147). P. Ebony sees it as an "act of sexual aggression" against the victim (16). United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes defines rape as "sexual penetration or intercourse without valid consent of the victim" (15). World Health Organization further defines rape as any physically forced or coerced penetration, the vulva or anus, using penis or other body parts or an object" (qtd. in Kalbfleisch, *Gender Power*… 50). One thing is clear, rape is a violation of human right because it is done forcefully without consent and consideration of human dignity. This is a serious issue since it encourages domination and oppressive control which could result to physical injuries, psychological or mental problems.

Childhood Sexual Abuse and the Narrative Representation of Traumatic Experiences

In *Under the Tongue* (1996), the traumatic sexual abuse of the girl character, Zhizha, forms the focus of this discussion. In the novel, Vera deals with a taboo theme of incestuous rape which is rarely discussed publicly by families, friends and other social groups in Zimbabwe, indeed, Africa. Zhizha, the protagonist of *Under the Tongue* is a 10-year old child whose childhood has been repressed as a result of her father's sexual abuse. Eagleton observes that "every human being has to undergo this repression of what Freud named the 'pleasure principle' by the 'reality principle', but for some of us, and arguably for the whole societies, the repression may become excessive and make us ill" (131). This clearly explains the condition of Zhizha in Vera's novel.

Martina Kopf stresses a major concern of childhood sexual abuse which suppresses expression and obviously results to "soul death" (245). According to Kopf,

> We do not always bear this failure of language in mind. Usually we associate such abuse only with its sexual dimension, perceiving only the physical, visible part of the drama. The part that is more difficult to discern – particularly owing to the extreme secrecy that usually accompanies family violence – is the violent assault on a child's mental and spiritual growth in the world. This assault is particularly serious, as it attacks a symbolic order still under construction, a still flexible and fluid and as such specifically vulnerable system of values and meanings. (245)

The underlying message of the above quotation vividly captures the condition of Zhizha who is burdened with her violent experience which forces her to unconsciously keep the act (rape) enclosed in her memory. Invariably, Zhizha is forced into the state of being complicit with the one who commits the crime of rape. This makes it impossible for her to narrate her violent experience. In essence, Zhizha's trauma is caused by deep pain and confusion with uncomfortable feeling due to recognition or consciousness of shame, dishonor or indecent conduct that overwhelm her leaving her traumatized and silenced. Zhizha's condition has relevance in Kpof's observation of trauma victims. According to Kopf, trauma victims are known "not to have access to language as an adequate means to transmit what has been done to them, they will experience a loss of confidence in language itself as an integrating system of signs and signification. This loss of confidence occurs at a stage where the children are still growing into the system of language and signification" (246).

In presenting the painful forced narrative of a distressed girl-child who is raped by her biological father, Vera attempts to deal with the issues of trauma, identity and displacement in childhood. According to Judith Herman, "psychological trauma is an affliction of the powerless" (33). In *Under the Tongue*, Zhizha is powerless because, she is too young to defend herself during the rape. This powerlessness and her traumatic sexual experience cause a mental disorder marked by the distortion of Zhizha's real identity. The term, "identity" is used in this study largely to refer to the way the girl character sees herself after her traumatic sexual encounter with her father. Zhizha's repressed identity is thus influenced by the context, perspective and consciousness of her traumatic sexual childhood experience. Vera's girl protagonist is unable to narrate her story of rape as a result of trauma. According to Kopf,

> Trauma resists narrative representation. At the same time, it urges its own narration. In the form of traumatic memory, such narration is characterized by repetition: the impulse to re-live an act again and again. Traumatic memory adheres to the unconscious and the body from where it unfolds its catalogue of constrictive and intrusive symptoms, grouped under the medical diagnosis Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: flashbacks, re-enactments, amnesia, dissociation, displacement, numbing, etc. (246)

Zhizha's inability to communicate her experiences suggests repression. According to Schmid, "repression leads to a state of mind where an individual can no longer revive his or her pushed down memory" (3). Zhizha's inability to recall her violent experiences is not an active repression where she consciously pushes her undesirable memory away. Her mental state is caused by dissociation which occurs just as the trauma is occurring, and not after undergoing the traumatic experience. According to A.M Ludwig, "dissociation represents a process whereby certain mental functions which are ordinarily integrated with other functions presumably operate in a more compartmentalized or automatic way usually outside the sphere of conscious awareness or memory recall" (93). Vera tells a gory tale, but the subtlety of her artistic vision is penetrating to clearly show that a deliberate repression of experiences by the girl protagonist is not possible.

Yvonne Vera's *Under the Tongue* is a good example of trauma novel. In this analysis, the researcher represents how trauma and pathological behaviour reflect in the behaviour and expression of the girl-child (Zhizha). *Under the Tongue* has many concepts of Freudian and Caruth's trauma theory ingrained in the character and in the experiences of the protagonist of the novel. Vera is unable to clearly narrate the protagonist's past traumatic experience using a linear plot structure as a result of her emotional state. This explains why Zhizha's story is narrated in fragments and alternating chapters. Hence, J. Hemmings maintains that "each fragment contains a message, a story, but resists a tidy or forced conclusion" (237).

Vera's *Under the Tongue* deals with the subject of incest and the continuous quest or struggle of the girl-child (Zhizha) to wriggle out of her traumatic state. In the novel, trauma is indefinitely continuous and insistently repetitive. This trauma is also depicted in the characters of the novel, Zhizha's mother and her grandmother who not only feel Zhizha's pain, but are reminded of their past traumatic experiences. In essence, these three female characters represent traumatized women in Zimbabwean society — Zhizha's grandmother who is abused by her husband, Zhizha's mother, who is exploited by her husband, and Zhizha, who is raped by her biological father. The quotation: "Grandmother protects me with her weeping, tells me of the many places, the many sorrows, the many wounds women endure" (*Under the Tongue* 122) is a clear indication that the oppression of the female gender has been a major problem in Zimbabwe. Shamaila Dodhy observes that "in Zimbabwe, the political and economic crisis went along with sexual violence against girls and women. Through this aesthetic endeavour, Vera has protested against in-house abuse presented against the backdrop of fierce anti-colonial struggle" (234). In fact, Zhizha expresses fear concerning the issue of sexual abuse which has silenced the female gender. Zhizha confesses: "I am afraid to listen to Grandmother, to discover her places of silence. I know there is a wide lake in her memory, a lake in which ripples grow to the edges of the sky, a lake in which all our grief is hidden. Her word rests at the bottom of silent lakes but she will find the word and give it to me" (*Under the Tongue* 70).

Obviously, Zhizha is psychologically and emotionally affected by her forced sexual experience. This indeed causes a mental disorder which affects her memory and her perception of things in the real world. Felman and Laub explain that "although real traumatic event takes place outside the parameters of normal reality, such as causality, sequence, place and time; this trauma is thus an event that has no beginning, no ending, no before, no during and no after" (69). The above

explanation clearly defines Vera's novel which is timeless and cyclic in structure – it has no beginning, no ending. Zhizha's dispersed thoughts keep echoing till the end of the novel. The explanation on traumatic event gives a clearer view to understanding Zhizha's mental condition in which she exhibits the symptoms of individuals who have experienced trauma. The protagonist is psychologically detached from her environment and speaks as one who has a mental disorder marked by anxiety or fear: "I hear crushing in my stomach. Water pulling at my dream, pulling at rock, pulling at my sleep. I awaken. An embrace, once more, of lightening, entering my sleep' (*Under the Tongue* 123). The above quotation is Zhizha's attempt to narrate her story of rape.

In the beginning of the novel, the act of sexual abuse is not explicitly depicted in a plain language. It is metaphorically represented through the voice of Zhizha's father which constantly haunts her conscience and sleep, thus swallowing her power of expression. In the story, Zhizha presents her body as a physical environment, precisely, a landscape or territory that has been ravaged by a terrorist— "my voice meets rock, meets water, grows silent and dead" (*Under the Tongue,* 124). In fact, Zhizha confesses that "the moon is wounded by the darkness. The shadow of the moon has turned bright with the serenity of death" (*Under the Tongue* 124). Zhizha employs the metaphors of water, moon, sky and rock to communicate the extent her body has been polluted and damaged. This properly conveys the message that her tongue ceases to function due to anxiety and fear. Zhizha confesses: "I touch my tongue. It is heavy like stone…. A tongue which no longer lives, no longer weeps. It is buried beneath rock. My tongue is a river. I touch my tongue in search of the places of my growing. My tongue is heavy with sleep. I know a stone is buried in my mouth, carried under my tongue. My voice has forgotten me" (*Under the Tongue* 1).

From the beginning of the novel, Vera employs the images of the tongue being frozen, immobile and an utterly estranged part of Zhizha's body. From another perspective, it can be said that the metaphor employed in the above quotation virtually means that Zhizha's voice has been muted. The silencing that Zhizha experiences automatically allows memories and voices to permeate her enclosed mind. Her thoughts wander endlessly without direction or chronology; hence projecting a shift in movement or displacement representing a floating body displaced by the river—"the sky meets the river moving beneath stone. The river rises. Father pulls me down into the river" (*Under the Tongue* 125). In the end of Zhizha's narrative, the readers learn that her secluded territory or landscape has been forcefully opened by her father while she is asleep—"he pulls at my dream and I sink beneath the pounding which falls through my eyes. It is night. Roots grow out of my stomach out of my mouth out of me" (*Under the Tongue* 125-126).

Though Zhizha's body, mind and spirit have been split open by violence, she is however willing to allow her grandmother's voice and consoling words to aid her narrative. Kopf observes that:

> Grandmother's voice, which Zhizha recalls and evokes inside her, does not enter or penetrate her. It "remembers" her, "embraces" her, "follows" her. These terms suggest that this other voice respects and tries to rebuild the boundaries of Zhizha's self. The excessive appearance of voices makes us acknowledge right from the beginning that, whatever happened, it is significant on the level of language. (249)

Significantly, Vera's novel performs how trauma works by expressly exposing the failure to tell. In line with the above view, Irene Kacandes observes that,

> Literary texts can be about trauma, in the sense that they can depict perpetrations of violence against characters who are traumatized by the violence and then successfully or unsuccessfully witness their trauma. But texts can also 'perform' trauma, in the sense that they can 'fail' to tell the story, by eliding, repeating, and fragmenting components of the story. (56)

Zhizha as a traumatized girl and victim of family violence is passive and helpless. Her grandmother perceives her as someone who is totally overwhelmed by her experience; but the fact remains that she is submerged in a complex internal struggle. This is seen in her mental language which constantly utters her muteness—"I bite hard my tongue….My voice is sinking down into my stomach. My voice is crumbling and falling apart. My voice burns beneath my chest" (*Under the Tongue* 123). The reader of *Under the Tongue* is a witness to the persuasive muteness that is marked by a struggle to articulate words, a struggle to clearly narrate her experience in clear coherent language. Indeed, this muteness signifies an internal strife to recollect her experience and tell her story of rape.

Zhizha's narration does not create a space for the readers to distinguish between reality and her imagination since she encounters the same hallucinatory images day and night. This creates confusion for the readers who make efforts to understand Zhizha's narration which is replete with obstacles – fragmented thoughts and words. This fragmentation keeps the readers floating on the narration as they try to move through Zhizha's mind, body and mental landscape. This most times brings difficulty in interpreting the images or rhythms found in her narration. Indeed, Vera's story acknowledges the persistence of silenced voices which clearly depict how trauma works— "I run, my mouth covered in silence (*Under the Tongue* 142). Mother is turning into a single horrid sound, her voice beaten and lost, her shouts cowering in the midst of her dying. Her voice is crushed, turns into dust, rises in a piercing empty wail" (*Under the Tongue* 150).

Under the Tongue is perceived as an imitation of trauma due to the way it employs repetition and fragmentation in narrating the story. Zhizha, the only child of Runyararo and Muroyinwa, is presented as a child of war who faces series of sexual abuse at home, a struggle that leaves her in a psychological state where she has lost the ability to speak. In a painful and evocative manner,

Zhizha presents the account of her rape in a non-chronological sequence thus presenting a fragmented flow of events. Zhizha speaks:

> I hear breathing, violent, breathing, on rock. A rigid silence.
> Father … between my legs.
> Wet between my legs, Blood-wet wetness. Not flowing wet. Slippery,
> Not so loud.
> He put mucus here, and blood …
> Quiet.
> He put mucus between my legs …
> Quiet.
> Am I going to die?
> Quiet.
> He broke my stomach …
> He put blood between my legs. (*Under the Tongue*, 228)

Though Zhizha's reconstruction of her rape is not clearly named as 'rape or sexual abuse' in the novel; the use of constructed imagery and symbols aid in interpreting her experience. One thing is clear, Zhizha's narrative does not develop into a progressing story. It merely floats on the spot revolving around her constructed mental images, thus repeating her mental images in a circular structure without ending.

In narrating her story, Zhizha presents her traumatic past experiences in fragments. The fragmented thoughts of Zhizha evidently depict Vera's attempt to transform traumatic memory into a narrative memory. This imitation of trauma reflects Vera's creative skills in depicting the scene of rape with figurative aptness. The effect of the above narration is able to create mental images of rape or sexual abuse in the mind of the readers. To further the discussion on traumatic memories, Shamalia Dodhy and Hardev Kaur observe that "these traumatic memories refuse to become a part of the narrative memory, but become frozen in time and are perpetually re-experienced in painful, disassociated traumatic present" (82), thus signaling the act of dissociation. Pierre Janet observes that "dissociation reflects a horizontal layered model of the

mind. When a subject does not remember a trauma, its 'memory' is contained in an alternate system of consciousness, which may be subconscious or dominate conscious" (qtd in Schmid, 3).

Zhizha is aware of the dissociation which obstructs her reconstruction of past experiences through narrative memory. She confesses: "I wait beneath a fervent sky. The shadow of the moon is wounded by the darkness. I search for the moon which has left the sky. Memory has left the sky. It is night" (*Under the Tongue* 124). Indeed, all good memories about Zhizha's childhood have disappeared from her thoughts that she is now surrounded with the darkness of the night which symbolizes traumatic experience. Zhizha laments:

> My eyelids collapse, heavy with sleep. I hear voices filled with tears. Darkness trembles with the memory of the moon. It is night. Grandmother cries for our origin. We met in water, she cries. Our dreams are birth and death. In the gathering darkness Grandmother's voice rises piercing into the night, is swallowed by the darkness, returns in one tremulous echo, rises again surging forward, tumbling in a cascade bright with moon seeking the forgotten, the departed, who wait to be remembered. (*Under the Tongue*, 124)

The pessimism of the novel is deepened in the above quotation. Then, the despair of the novel is further pin-pointed because the protagonist confesses her thoughts and feelings without fully recollecting her traumatic experiences. Zhizha is conscious of the fact that she is traumatized, but one thing is clear – she is unable to integrate her familiar experiences into existing meaningful narration because of her mental state. In line with the foregoing, Schmid explains that an "individual may be entirely unable to integrate a specific terrifying experience which causes the memory to be stored differently, and therefore might not be available for the act of remembering" (1).

To capture traumatic experiences using the narrative memory, Zhizha substitutes her real experience with her own created images –- moon, darkness, sky, night, and voices (*Under the*

Tongue, 131). In essence, Zhizha forms new memories to replace her physical (true) experiences, which are too sorrowful to recollect. Schmid further explains that:

> With the help of conditioning and repeating to remember the same false memories over and over again the trauma survivor believes his new memories and integrates them into meaning scheme as his legitimate past. The real fragments of the traumatic event are pushed to the bottom of the memory system where they can only be remembered through the stimulation of a question or certain situation. (2)

Significantly, the emotional involvement of Grandmother in the story aids the trauma survivor, Zhizha in recollecting her distorted memory through constant repetition. As Zhizha recollects in bits, Grandmother urges her to voice her sorrow and free her mind. Zhizha's narration has allowed her to tell her own story of pain which she has concealed for a long time. Significantly, this narration is creatively manipulated to motivate remembrance in order to depict her mother's hurt and pain as part of life's learning process.

> Mother calls to me in a voice just like mine, she grows from inside of me…. I change into me, and I say a e i o u. I remember all my letters. I tell my mother and she repeats after me and I laugh then I repeat after mother who repeats after me and I after her … I have turned into mother, and she laughs, because she has become me. The letters flow from me to mother. My mother's voice is resonant and searching. She says we live with our voices rich with remembrance. We live with words. (*Under the Tongue* 202-203)

The above quotation suggests that Zhizha and her mother have similar hidden stories to tell by writing, pronouncing, spelling and repeating letters in order to communicate their pain to people. Both Zhizha and her mother have been silenced for a long time which gives them the joy of articulating their thoughts together. Therefore, in this state of voicelessness, "it becomes challenging to express the psychological trauma which by its nature is "unspeakable" narrative of the victim" (Dodhy and Kaur 74). The foregoing view is reminiscent of Anne Whitehead's assertion that "the more experimental forms emerging out of postmodernist and postcolonial

fiction offer the contemporary novelist a promising vehicle for communicating the unreality of trauma, while still remaining faithful to the facts of history" (87).

Under the Tongue fits into the new genre of trauma fiction which stems out of the "theoretical movements of postmodernism and postcolonialism – together with a postwar legacy or consciousness" (Whitehead 81). This consciousness in fiction is displayed in forms such as "intertextuality, repetition and a dispersed or fragmented narrative voice" (Whitehead 84). Vera in presenting the fragmented thoughts of her protagonist obviously wants her voice to be heard, her sorrows to be seen and her pains to be felt by the readers. Therefore by documenting her repetitive and patterned thoughts, the readers get to understand Zhizha's mental state.

The enormity of pain Zhizha suffers is psychologically damaging. This inner sorrow is associated with symbolic metaphoric images like tree, rain, clouds, rock, sky and lightening. The pain is so burdensome for Zhizha that she relies heavily on her grandmother's feelings and thoughts:

> Grandmother says how can we bury the pain which has visited us? It is deep and hidden. This is a tree whose seed has come from unknown lands. There is no water to banish it. This pain cannot be carried in the mouth. There is no mouth. It follows one like a shadow, this pain. It is hewn from rock and larger than memory. How can we carry it on our shoulders? It is swollen like clouds of rain. It is greater than all our yesterdays. It is lightening from a burnt sky. (*Under the Tongue* 160)

The images Zhizha employs in her fragmented narrative are indeed ambiguous, but paint mental pictures which are experienced by the reader to understand the enormity of her pain. Zhizha's images are indeed made of solid, liquid and indestructible forms which are linked to nature. The totality of these physical elements of nature which make up her description shows that the pain she feels cannot be easily forgotten. The rhetorical question in the above quotation, "how can we carry it on our shoulders?" (*Under the Tongue,* 160) is important in interpreting Zhizha's

condition in order to represent the plight of the female gender in Zimbabwe. The use of the possessive plural pronoun "our" denotes that girls and women are oppressed in one way or the other in Zimbabwe. A striking comparison is made between female oppression and male freedom in the novel – men are given the freedom to explore the society by engaging in guerilla war-fare as seen in the depiction of characters like Muroyiwa (Zhizha's father) and Tonderayi; while women are exploited by men as seen in the scene where Muroyiwa chases a butterfly: "if there were any butterflies in the mountains, Muroyiwa would meet their delicate caress like a restored blindness. He was curious to meet butterflies amid the sound of death, the wailing voices of women, the distresses of children, the dry desperation" (*Under the Tongue*, 138). The butterfly signifies the female gender; while Muroyiwa is a patriarchal figure (Oedipal figurehead) symbolizing male suppression. The narrator in the quotation below further traces the patriarchal oppression of Muroyiwa to his father's oppressive attitude towards Zhizha's grandmother and other women:

> VaGomba was blind. Muroyiwa had been born into his father's blindness and received it and contained him like a vessel. At birth, he had moved from calabash into the blindness and because of this for him the butterflies surrounding the mountains would be pitched louder than the sound of death. He had received many longings from his father's blindness. (*Under the Tongue* 138)

The literal description of the word, 'blindness' in the above quotation signifies female oppression perpetrated by men in Zimbabwe. The literal objects of oppression are "the butterflies" which symbolically denote women and girls. The quotation above indicates that men are blinded by their selfish quest for sexual satisfaction thereby causing untold pain to the female gender. All these images are figuratively used to enhance Vera's artistic style. Psychoanalysis will metaphorically refer to all the patriarchal figures as 'Oedipus' – the figureheads of colonialism and oppression.

Depression and anxiety are products of oppressive power caused by the actions of Oedipal figureheads. Vera's novel is replete with emotional anxiety. Anxiety is a disorder caused by trauma. Zhizha is heavily touched by trauma which damages her psyche and makes experiences difficult to be explored through language. Zhizha, the girl character, fears that she might be entangled in another traumatic event. This intense fear creates frightening attacks (hallucinations) which she dreads day and night. Thus, the conjured images of 'darkness' and 'red dot' forming shapes in her body denote nervousness. The quotation below is replete with signs of hallucination. As a result of the protagonist's unstable mental state, she constructs unrealistic images that define her thoughts:

> In the darkness I see just one red dot and I can store it anywhere inside my head, even under my eye. I watch it move inside my head till it disappears. It grows very small. When I look at a small red dot it grows and fills my head. The darkness is very large. The darkness is very large. I am frightened. I hear Grandmother falling, dying. Runyararo … (*Under the Tongue* 135-136).

Repression is an essential feature of trauma which is perceived to be a reaction to traumatic events or situations. Zhizha's repression is an involuntary rejection from the consciousness of her painful or disagreeable ideas, memories, feelings or impulses about her rape. The inability of Zhizha to voice her experiences is an indication that she is frightened by her father's savagely violent action which disassociates and fragments her mind (thoughts). This explains why her grandmother beckons on her to control her fragmented thoughts and liberate her mind from the horrific experience. Zhizhi uses monologue to narrate her grandmother's advice:

> Grandmother says it is sometimes good to forget, to bury the heavy things of now, the things which cannot be remembered without death becoming better than life. Such things are for forgetting, for burying beneath the earth. But a woman must remember the moment of birth and death. (*Under the Tongue*, 131)

To explore *Under the Tongue* in the light of Freudian trauma theory, it is very obvious that Zhizha, the girl character, experiences traumatic neurosis. This psychological hurtful condition is because of an alteration in her father's integrity. As a result, Zhizha loses faith in humanity since her nightmares incubate the image of her father with horrible imagery that refutes her sense of perception. Zhizha wants a better future but the continuous remembrance of her traumatic experience alters her identity keeping her perpetually in delusion.

Undoubtedly, the memory of the horrific rape leaves Zhizha silenced and so traumatized throughout the story that she continuously feels confused by her disturbing thoughts. Again, the tragic death of Muroyinwa, her father immediately after the violation of Zhizha's body adds to her shell shock. These two traumatic events indeed torment her reality and dreams. Zhizha is affected by delusions to the extent that she hallucinates and loses her identity through nightmares. Zhizha sees the image of her father in her sleep violating her body and she speaks,

> Father speaks in an unremembered voice. He has swallowed sleep. I see father waiting in my sleep. I see father in the midst of my cry. I see father. Father…. He calls in a whisper and cry. Father… His voice is full of the unknown things of my growing destroying sleep. His voice says death is also life. He calls my name in the midst of night. Father…His whisper is heavier than night, than dream, than silence. He carries death in his arms, banishes morning. (*Under the Tongue* 123-124).

The above quoted lines are replete with ellipses, single word, short sentences, empty spaces and single lines. Kopf explains that Vera employs the above stipulated forms to "translate traumatic memory into narrative memory" (250). Kopf goes further to state that in "Vera's novel, paragraphs are interrupted which consist of 'torn sentences, short and sharp fragments or flashbacks" (250).

In *Under the Tongue*, Zhizha is indeed a good example of a trauma victim because the incestuous rape threatens her mental and physical freedom, thereby creating insomnia and nightmares.

S. Felman and D. Laub state that:

> Trauma survivors live not with memories of the past, but with an event that could not and did not proceed through to its completion, has no ending, attained no closure, and therefore, as far as its survivors are concerned, continues into the present and is current in every respect. The survivor, indeed, is not truly in touch either with the core of his traumatic reality or with the fatedness of its reenactments, and thereby remains entrapped in both. (69)

To depict vividly the effect of trauma on her protagonist, Vera avoids the use of linear plot structure. She employs a very loose plot structure and unconventional metaphoric forms to depict the condition of the trauma victim. In exploring trauma, Freud and Caruth employ literary metaphors to identify and explicitize its damaging consequences to the psyche. Both Freud and Caruth explain that traumatic event is so overwhelming on its victim to the extent that the victim loses the ability to speak. In *Under the Tongue*, "Vera's depiction of the emotional state of the girl-child shows that severe traumatic experience resists language while fiction adopts language for narrating traumatic events" (Dodhy and Kaur 78). The above view explains the readers' difficulty in comprehending the structure of the plot and the character delineation.

Zhizha seems to be entangled in a crisis that threatens her survival. She cries often as "salt spreads through her eyes…" (*Under the Tongue* 123). All these considered, align with Caruth's observation that for "individuals who undergo trauma, it is not the moment of the event, but of the passing out of it that is traumatic" (*Explorations in Memory* 4). It is obvious that Zhizha is restless and sorrowful about her situation. She confesses,

> Heaviness grows on my forehead pulling me away into darkness so complete and I cry, my crying seems to come from ears. The darkness is taking me away. A brilliant light

> falls into my eyes like breaking glass, so I close my eyes again and creep back into the darkness where perhaps my mother will come and find me. (*Under the Tongue* 217)

Inspite of Zhizha's sorrowful state of mind, she needs to construct her own story. The flashbacks in narrative construction help her to reestablish the lost trust she has about reality.

The recurring intrusion of nightmares is evident in the novel. These nightmares are displayed by the constant repetition of words by Zhizha which becomes a pattern in the structure of the novel. The frequent occurrence of horrible nightmares heightens her death instinct – "I hear crushing in my stomach. Water pulling at my dream, pulling at my rock, pulling at my sleep. I awaken. An embrace, once more, of lightning, entering my sleep. A burning grows deep beneath the sky. A shadow grows on my chest, struggles to depart. I die in my sleep" (*Under the Tongue* 123). The above quotation is an attempt by Zhizha to construct her rape narrative through nightmares. However, these nightmares are not coherent at all because she is overwhelmed by her traumatic experience. From Zhizha's nightmares, it is obvious that she is powerless over her situation.

In conclusion, it is evident that *Under the Tongue* depicts narrative failure because of intense trauma which is seen in Zhizha's inability to tell her story in a plain language. Significantly, Vera's novel is able to depict the acts of recollection, listening and witnessing. These three acts are very important in the novel because they aid the readers in interpreting Zhizha's story.

Female Bonding and Female Assertiveness as Strategies for Emancipation

Female bonding is perceived as a womanist concept which emerged as a result of the unjust treatment or oppressive acts against the female gender. This concept expresses female friendship and cooperation in the works of feminist writers. Patricia Collins sees female bonding as "a source of achieving a united voice" (96). According to Audre Lorde, it is "a source of power, strength and nurturance, and it is there to be tapped by all women who do not fear the revelations

of connection to themselves" (138). In Chioma Opara's view, it is "a facet of female power" (34).

In *Under the Tongue*, Vera delves into womanist ideology by depicting female bonding through relationships. This bonding signifies sisterhood which denotes a common way of collectively sharing female sorrow which emanates as a result of oppression or violence. Vera's womanism is perceived in the relationship Zhizha shares with her grandmother and mother. This is indeed connectedness since these three female characters encourage themselves to be strong despite oppressive circumstances. Their collective stance in defending and encouraging themselves signifies female bonding. This connectedness is articulated by Zhizha: "I listened to her cry which carries all my sorrow of yesterday and I know that I have brought this river to her. I am inside Grandmother. I am Grandmother" (*Under the Tongue* 124).

This female connectedness or bonding also explains the reason Runyararo killed her husband to revenge her daughter's humiliation. According to the omniscient narrator, "mother. I remember her unspoken story lost and forgotten. She killed her husband, grandfather says" (*Under the Tongue*, 163). Both Zhizha and her grandmother feel agonizing pain. As a witness to the traumatic sexual experience, Grandmother's words help Zhizha to find her voice amidst traumatic silencing that characterized her thoughts. Grandmother lends her voice to Zhizha's plight by urging her to speak out her feelings. Zhizha's confession buttresses the above view: "I know that Grandmother will heal me with her word, her word that is for remembering all that has visited her suffering, that has accompanied my growing…" (*Under the Tongue* 132).

The relationship between Zhizha and her grandmother is indeed the "psychological process of dealing" with her problems (Eagleton 138). This special relationship between Zhizha and her grandmother reflects Freud's stance on 'speaking out thought or experiences' (narrative

memory) which is a way trauma survivors should begin their healing process (Eagleton 138). This is achieved by Grandmother's stimulation of her own plight.

It is worthy to note that human rights have been grossly abused in Vera's *Under the Tongue*. Girls and women have been sexually abused, molested and silenced. This has greatly traumatized them leading to perpetual muteness, fragmented thoughts, neurosis and emotional problems. Zhizha, Runyararo and Grandmother are depicted as victims of male violence. Zhizha is raped by her father, Grandmother is continuously made fun of for giving birth to a sick son by her husband, and Runyararo is sexually starved and humiliated by her husband's inhuman rape. The above oppressive abuse of the female gender pushes Vera to imbue Runyararo with feminist radicalism. This is seen in the violent feminist stance Runyararo takes in revenging her daughter's rape. As a radical feminist, Vera presents Runyararo as a woman pushed to the wall by her husband's violent act. As a core radical feminist, Runyararo resorts to killing her husband. By the above depicted act of violence by Runyararo, Vera comes across to the reader as a radical feminist. The above act by Zhizha's mother denotes female bonding, a practical way of showing female solidarity which aims at destabilizing patriarchal stronghold for female liberation. Significantly, Zhizha, Grandmother and Runyararo have shared sentiments which are rooted in their history of violence perpetrated by men. Hence, the strength of their relationship, friendship and love is solely knitted together by their shared oppression. This helps in awakening the consciousness of the victim, Zhizha. Indeed, Grandmother constantly urges Zhizha to articulate her pains to achieve a certain level of purgation of emotion. Through Grandmother's connection with Zhizha, the readers are able to understand the enormity of the violence that silences the female gender. Therefore, in working together through listening and witnessing, female solidarity is depicted because the female characters bond together to liberate themselves. Vera's

depiction of female bonding indeed reveals the strength women display to dismantle and confront male chauvinism. Vera's underlying message on female bonding is to depict a struggle – a fight for female liberation in Zimbabwe.

CHAPTER FOUR

DIMENSIONS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST THE GIRL-CHILD IN MALE SELECTED NOVELS

In this chapter, the novels of the selected male writers, Nuruddin Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* (1970) and Ikechukwu Asika's *Tamara* (2013) are analyzed. The above selected novels are investigated to ascertain the different kinds of gender-based violence (cultural, sexual, psychological, physical, verbal) and their negative impact on the growth and development of the girl characters. The selected novelists' feminist consciousness enables the readers to contextualize authorial thoughts and feelings, while exposing them to see the various forms of violation of human rights and their consequences.

This chapter also analyzes how gender-based violence helps to construct the consciousness, choices and responses of the girl characters in the selected novels. It also examines the strategies employed by the girl characters to resist different patriarchal powers that inhibit their freedom and childhood. The analysis is thematically and theoretically explored.

PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE AGAINST THE GIRL-CHILD IN NURUDDIN FARAH'S *FROM A CROOKED RIB*

Nuruddin Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* begins with violence against Ebla, the heroine of the novel. In the novel, the girl character, Ebla forms the focus of this research because she is subjected to gender-based violence. Ebla's grandfather, Giumaleh (Ebla's old suitor), Gheddi (Ebla's cousin), Awill (Ebla's first husband) and Tiffo (Ebla's second husband) are patriarchal figures who subject Ebla to bartering (forced marriage), servitude, stereotype, discrimination and emotional trauma in the novel. Ebla's experiences vividly capture the plight of the girl-child in Somalia. The underlying message of the novel stresses the fact that the Somalia patriarchal

society encourages female subjugation and oppression. The above views are in line with Olawale Albert who asserts that "violence against girls and women exists in various forms in everyday life in all societies. They are beaten, mutilated, burned, sexually abused and raped. Such violence is a major obstacle to the achievement of peace…and should be given special attention" ("Women and Urban Violence…" 19). Olawale's assertion is true because Ebla is constantly bartered, sexually molested and negelected because she is a girl. These experiences leave her emotionally and psychologically depressed leading to her quest for emancipation and self-actualization.

In Farah's *From a Crooked Rib*, there are also discernible cultural definitions of power relations which could result to gender-based violence such as gender roles, gender discrimination, stereotype and cultural prejudices against Ebla, the heroine of the novel. Indeed, cultural definitions of gender affect Ebla's ability to integrate socially in different patriarchal contexts. This creates a feeling of powerlessness which leaves her psychologically depressed or traumatized. Based on this feeling of powerlessness Ebla embarks on a long illusive quest for self-assertion and liberation from patriarchal modes of existence. Basically, the acts of violence against Ebla manifest in forms such as gender discrimination, inequality, sexual abuse, and forced marriage.

Gender Roles and Discrimination

The social position of girls and women in most African societies is closely related to the role they play. According to Theresa Abok, "girls and women do not enjoy the power, opportunity, recognition and privilege given to boys and men. They are inhibited by the restrictions imposed on them by tradition and culture" (121).

Abok further stresses that:

> Tradition and culture are the contributory factors in the downgrading of the female gender which is perpetrated through myth, superstitions and other artificial barriers. Thus the religious life which is mixed up with their culture has been used to the detriment of girls and women. (121)

The above cultural ideology is subject to understanding the social reality which becomes an instrument of female oppression. This cultural ideology is the ideology of patriarchy which creates gender relations. Tiwo Oloruntoba-Oju observes that " gender relations is power relations, hence the frequent construction of gender in terms of the struggle for dominance between the genders, or in terms of the conscious or unconscious negotiation of psychological, socio-economic and political space by the sexes…" (213). In Abok's view, "gender is a dynamic concept that refers to socially constructed roles, attributes and responsibilities that are related to being male or female in any society" (105). Hence, the inability of a society to create equality results to limitations, prejudices, stereotypes, discrimination and rigid gender roles. Abok maintains that "gender roles denotes sexual classification of roles on social basis, …which define what is considered appropriate for men and women within a society" (106-7).

Gender roles are culturally biased. Hence, they manifest in different forms and could cause discrimination between individuals in society. Gender discrimination has been defined as "the systematic, unfavourable treatment of individuals on the basis of their gender, which denies them opportunities, rights and resources. It occurs when individuals are given differential treatment on the basis of gender" (Abok 107).

Nuruddin Farah demonstrates a positive commitment as a novelist who depicts issues from a realistic perspective. Farah's depiction of a society where the oppressive dictatorial law, customs and ritual subjugate the female gender has indeed attracted feminist outrage. In *From a Crooked*

Rib, Farah exposes the problems of gender discrimination and inequality that characterize the Somalia cultural milieu. Girls are treated unfairly and are not given equal rights with boys. Farah stresses the acceptability of the male gender in Somalia cultural context. According to the narrator, "as many as twenty or thirty camels are allotted to each son. The girls, however, have to wait until fates give them a new status in life: the status of marriage" (*From a Crooked Rib* 22). The above quotation suggests that the general pattern of inheritance in Somalia is patrilineal. Hence, the general principle of customary law of inheritance is solely measured using a criterion – being a boy or a man. The Somalia native custom of property rights is not flexible. It creates discrimination and inequality between males and females. This discrimination starts right from birth. The ominiscient narrator stresses that "a she-camel is given to the son, as people say 'tied to his navel' as soon as he is born" while nothing is given to the girl child" (*From a Crooked Rib* 22). Sunday Athanasius Duru thus observes that "the withholding of the right of inheritance from the female is a resultant effect of a patriarchal tailored society – a society that subjugates and subordinates the female and places her under the male" ("Female Inheritance…" 329). This is what feminists are fighting against to achieve full emancipation of all females from patriarchal oppression and discrimination.

Significantly, Somalia society elevates the male above the female. In essence, males are valued more than females. Farah through his female character, Ebla, contends with this situation where high preference is given to boys. The narrator comments that Ebla, the protagonist of Farah's *From a Crooked Rib*, "loathed this discrimination between sexes: the idea that boys lift up the prestige of the family and keep the family's name alive. Even a moron-male cost twice as much as two women in terms of blood-compensation" (*From a Crooked Rib*, 22). In line with the above, Selden and Widdowson assert that "patriarchy subordinates the female to the male or

treats the female as an inferior male, and this power is exerted, directly or indirectly, in civil and domestic life to constrain women" (214). Duru further asserts that "it is unfair for the female to be deprived of her rights to properties just because of reproductive difference" (330). From feminist perspective, feminism advocates for equal treatment of both sexes – male and female for equity and fairness. In essence, feminism as observed by Maggie Humm supports "sexual equality combined with commitment to eradicate sexist domination and transform society" (*Modern Feminisms* 1). Kolawole also supports Humm when she asserts that, "all over the continent, there are areas of women's marginalization that call for a re-ordering of the social order, and African women have peculiar needs in this area" (*Womanism and African*… 10). This view is in line with the researcher's view to give equal rights to males and females as regards inheritance and overall treatment.

Furthermore, in *From a Crooked Rib*, Farah questions the Somalia worldview of perceiving the female as a lesser human being than the male. Through Ebla's thoughts and comments on gender inequality, Farah "bitterly attacks the system that discriminately elevates the importance of boys and encourages the inferiorization of girls" (Kolawole, *Womanism and African*… 154). Farah's s depiction of Ebla's experiences with the idea presented by Kate Millet in *Sexual Politics* (1970). *Sexual Politics* as a classic feminist text clearly depicts the role patriarchy plays as a political institution in sexual relations especially in the "suppression or oppression of the female gender" (Clough 473). Millett seems to suggest that the oppression and limitation of the girl-child is evidently linked to the family as a basic structure or unit of the society. Hence, patriarchy which is instituted in Somalia cultural milieu controls and subjugates the female gender. In essence, Millett explains that sex-based oppression is political and cultural. She therefore advocates for sexual revolution to tackle the problem of girl-child oppression instituted in the family. Selden

and Widdowson explain that Millett's argument blames "economic inequality as the cause of women's oppression, an argument which opened up second-wave thinking about reproduction, sexuality and representation" (214). Selden and Widdowson further observe that the title of Millett's book, *Sexual Politics*, "announces her view of patriarchy, which she sees as pervasive and which demands a systematic overview of a political institution" (A Reader's Guide… 214).

Gender role is another patriarchal tool that further divides the world of male and female. This is solely hinged on gender differentiation. Ogonnaya and Besong observe that:

> Gender differentiation is the root of gender inequality and discrimination. This gender discrimination sets up the stage for gender identity and role assignment in the family and community. And as much as gender identity is at the base of gender assignment, an individual identified with a superior gender is given superior roles, while an individual identified with inferior gender is assigned inferior roles. ("The Ontological…" 452)

Ebla, Farah's girl protagonist, exposes the inferior roles given to the females. According to the narrator, "…a woman's duty meant loading and unloading camels and donkeys after destination had been reached, and that life was a routine: goats for girls and camels for boys got on her nerves more than she could stand" (*From a Crooked Rib*, 21). To Ebla, "this allotment of assignments denoted the status of a woman, that she was lower in status than a man, and that she was weak" (*From a Crooked Rib*, 21). This predicament of girls and women has been traced to patriarchy "…which is responsible for the inferior status. Ebute Mary Onyiewu in line with the above view asserts that patriarchy is a social organization in which males assume power and create for females an inferior status. This means that patriarchy favours men, and subjugates women" (326).

In conclusion, Farah is mainly concerned with female oppression in Somalia. In *From a Crooked Rib*, Ebla's burdens are centered on the discrimination and inequalities that exist between males

and females. This readily captures Ebla's position in her family. In essence, these inequalities and oppressive treatment are the major forces that pushed Ebla to her inexorable quest for liberation.

From the beginning of the novel, Ebla is aware of her inferior status as a girl in Somali society through her own observation of cultural roles and positions. The traditional roles of men and women, boys and girls bestow on her a feeling of inferiority that has eaten deep into her psyche. Also her constant observation that boys take care of camels, while girls pasture goats (*From a Crooked Rib*, 13) is a good example of the discriminatory practices against the female gender in Somali society. The above discriminatory roles and practices are basic factors that motivate Ebla's resistance. All this unconsciously pushes her aggressive and rebellious superego to the extent that the inward traumatic pressures of her past experiences cannot be erased from her memory.

Forced Marriage

Forced marriage as a form of patriarchal oppression stems from the belief that girls and women are inferior. This indeed leads to gender bias. According to Onyiewu, "gender bias supports the notion that girls and women are weaklings who can be treated without concern…" (328). Farah's novel fundamentally indicts the patriarchal oppression and subjugation of the girl child. Farah encourages girls to assert themselves irrespective of cultural norms and old-fashioned traditions that have denied them their human rights.

Significantly, the narrative of Farah on forced marriage is captured in the view articulated by Ebla: "From experience, she knew that girls were materials, just like objects, or items on the shelf of a shop. They were sold and bought as shepherds sold their goats at market-places, or

shops-owners sold the goods to their customers. To a shopkeeper, what was the difference between a girl and his good? Nothing, absolutely nothing" (*From a Crooked Rib* 121).

Ebla is totally disappointed and overwhelmed with a strong feeling of insecurity because "docility and complete subsumation of will is demanded from her" (Chukwuma, "Voices and Choices…" 131). "In the home, she is not part of the decision-making as a daughter … even when the decisions directly affect her" (Chukwuma, "Voices and Choices…" 131). In the beginning of the novel, Ebla's grandfather gives her in marriage to an old man (Giumaleh) without her consent. "Giumaleh is an old man of forty-eight: fit to be her father" (*From a Crooked Rib*, 9). Bilal Ahmad Dar commenting on Ebla's plight observes that "the most inhuman and humiliating treatment meted out to girls in Somalia is forced marriage or what we call wife-barter. This is exemplified in a situation whereby a girl is coercively given out in marriage without her due consultations" (2267).

Ebla is relegated to the background. She is a second class citizen who is only good in looking after her grandfather, tending animals and being bartered like animals. Ebla's indifference and disgust towards the attitude of her grandfather is captured in the rhetorical question –"but should I think of someone who does not think of me? It is he who has given my hand to the old man, exchanging me for camels" (*From a Crooked Rib* 15). Farah elucidates the feminist tendency to challenge male dominance when Ebla runs away from her rural setting "to get free from all restraints, from being the wife of Giumaleh. To get away from unpleasantries. To break the ropes society had wrapped around her neck and to be free and be herself" (*From a Crooked Rib* 19). The narrator comments that "Ebla desired, more than anything, to fly away, like a cock, which has unknotted itself from the string tying its leg to the wall" (*From a Crooked Rib* 20-21).

Ebla's awareness of her oppressive condition pushes her to escape from the tyrannical oppressive hold of her grandfather. Her escape may be considered right or wrong; but from psychoanalytic and feminist perspectives, it is the only decision she has to take to salvage her honour and protect her psyche. Ebla's biological instinct found in the *id*, precisely, *eros* pushes her to engage in a life-sustaining activity in order to save her dreams. Indeed, the traumatic effects of her grandfather's actions mobilize this escape. Ebla's refusal to marry Giumaleh through her escape translates into her freedom from the string of forced marriage that binds her in chain.

Ebla's oppressive condition and escape from the patriarchal web of Somali culture fulfils what Kate Millett observes in her book *Sexual Politics* that "the family not only encourages its own members to adjust and conform, but acts as a unit in the government of the patriarchal state which rules its citizens through its family heads" (33). The above quotation is true because, escaping from the subjugation of the family as a unit of the society gives the female gender a desired freedom and space. Ebla's escape to the town of Belet Wene increases her awareness about the condition of the female gender in her rural village because she is confronted again with the issue of forced marriage. In Belet Wene, Ebla settles in the house of her cousin, Gheddi. She becomes a slave girl, acting as a midwife to Gheddi's wife (Aworalla) who is heavily pregnant, pasturing and milking cows for the family (*From a Crooked Rib* 42). Ebla's new experiences in the town bring her consciousness to the fact that the girl-child "is little less than a chattel as Gheddi turns her into a smuggling scandal" (Dar 2270). Gheddi uses Ebla to secure a loan from a broker in order to free himself from the police. To free himself totally, Gheddi secretly plans to marry Ebla off to the broker in exchange for the money he lent him. Gheddi makes this new arrangement without informing Ebla, the bride to be. From the foregoing, Ngozi Chuma-Udeh observes that "the most humiliating act meted to girls in Africa is forced marriage or wife barter.

This is exemplified in a situation whereby a girl is forcibly given out in marriage and without due consultations with her…" (74). Dar also comments that twice Ebla "falls prey to the piggish patriarchy that has no qualms and compunction to barter women like cows and camels" (2268). Ebla has also rejected this kind of marriage where girls are bought like ordinary objects. She comments: "I don't like this sort of marriage. But that is what women are – just like cattle, properties of someone or other, either your parents or your husband" (116).

One reading Farah's novel sees, glaringly, how Gheddi's house helps to reveal that girls are oppressed through forced marriage. In Gheddi's house, patriarchal kinship traits manifest in Ebla's life in the form of pasturing animals and looking after Gheddi's wife and baby. The forced marriage Ebla has been exposed to pushes her to liken Gheddi and her grandfather to beasts. According to Ebla, "cows are beasts, calves are beasts and so are goats. 'But we are beasts, too,' she thought. Isn't my grandfather a beast? If one shows one's bestiality by what one does then we are only better than these beasts by trying to explain our doings..." (*From a Crooked Rib* 32). The above quotation likens Ebla's condition to a mere animal that can be treated anyhow. In the above quotation also, we see Ebla's psychic discharge concerning the inferior status of the girl-child in Somalia. This arouses pity and fear as the readers are drawn to her plight and resistance against oppression.

Farah's psychic conflict is captured in Ebla's consciousness about Oedipal complex which according to Freud is "the beginnings of morality, conscience, law and all forms of social and religious authority" (Eagleton 136). Eagleton further explains that "… in introjecting patriarchal law, the child begins to form what Freud calls 'superego', the awesome, punitive voice of conscience within it. All, then, would now seem in place for gender roles to be reinforced, satisfactions to be postponed, authority to be accepted and the family and society to be

reproduced" (136). I find the above views very interesting and useful in interpreting Ebla's rebellious reaction, because her decisions and behaviour are strongly motivated by the instinctual desire of the *id*, arising in infancy, to experience pleasure and avoid pain. This is what Freud refers to as the "pleasure principle" (Eagleton 131). In fact, Farah forces the readers to identify in their minds his interpretation of Ebla's inner conflict that provides the unconscious dynamic action that moves through conflict, crisis, climax and resolution.

Farah, by depicting Ebla's forced marriages has evidently shown that patriarchy which is enshrined in the family, marriage, society, and religion has great control over the female body. This is very helpful in understanding the relationship that governs men and women in Somalia. Ebla's self-motivated consciousness is strongly linked to Karl and Friedrich Engels' revolutionary political philosophy (Marxism) that aims to capture a dictatorship of the proletariat. This inevitably subjects Ebla's experiences to Marxist-Feminist approach. Catharine MacKinnon maintains that:

> Marxism and feminism are theories of power and its distribution: inequality. They provide accounts of how social arrangements of patterned disparity can be internally rational yet unjust. But their specificity is not incidental. In Marxism, to be deprived of one's work, in feminism of one's sexuality, defines each one's conception of lack of power per se. They do not mean to exist side by side to insure that two separate spheres of social life are not overlooked, the interests of two groups are not obscured, or the contributions of two sets of variables are not ignored. (516)

In this research, feminist analysis in the identification of patriarchy as a social and historical structure would help readers to understand Ebla's struggles. Gheddi's attempts to exchange Ebla's hand in marriage links Marxist ideology to feminist objectives in order to present socio-economic formation that has enslaved the girl protagonist in the novel. Farah presents male

dominance as a creation of capitalism. In essence, through male dominance, Somali girls and women are sold, bought, exploited or controlled like mere objects, animals or properties.

In reading *From a Crooked Rib*, the theme of forced marriage and sexuality becomes very important in exploring the family as one of the structures of patriarchy. The story of Ebla, who escapes the family house and Gheddi's home fearing a forced marriage arrangement with Giumaleh and the broker, is a very good example. Ebla is simply valued as a property to be sold off by her family members, which consists of her grandfather and her sixteen-year-old brother. Hence, the story centers on various attempts by her family (grandfather, Ebla's brother and Gheddi) to own and sell her body to any man of their choice. Farah seems to suggest that the Somali family does not perceive the body of the girl-child as a free entity; it is rather seen as part of the material wealth or property that can be traded for goods or money. Thus, Ebla's body becomes a commodity which is exchanged for another. Helmi Ben Meriem explains that:

> The body as such is the site, upon which discursive operations act dis-empower that particular body. Actually, girls and women were objects to a discourse enunciated by men; this discourse emphasized a highly significant division between men and women in terms of the division between mind and body. Men are seen as the site of intellectual powers but also of physical status. Women and girls are seen as lacking the mental capacities and just reduced to their bodies. (87)

Ebla's body, just like the bodies of other Somali girls, is a commodity to be traded. In essence, they can be sold, bought and resold by men. Before, Ebla's forced arranged marriage to Giumaleh, "two of his sons had alternately courted her" (*From a Crooked Rib* 9). This is an indication that her body is seen as a mere commodity to be exploited by the family of Giumaleh. In analyzing Ebla's social setting under Marxist-feminism, it is relevant to bring in Heidi I. Hartmann's argument "that a materialist analysis demonstrates that patriarchy is not simply a psychic, but also a social and economic structure" (2). While pointing out "tensions between

patriarchal and capitalist interests, Hartmann argues that the accumulation of capital both accommodates itself to patriarchal social structure and helps to perpetuate it. Hartmann therefore suggests in this context that sexist ideology has assumed a peculiarly capitalist form in the present, illustrating one way that patriarchal relations tend to bolster capitalism"(2). Therefore, in *From a Crooked Rib*, bourgeois patriarchal relationships give rise to feminist agitation as the girl protagonist struggles to control her sexuality. Again, patriarchal capital interest generates class struggle which helps this research to explore how the relation of feminism to class struggle has been. In the novel, Ebla is seen in an open persistent struggle to liberate herself from the patriarchal capitalist web. Hence, Marxist feminist theory is employed by Farah as an attempt to achieve social change.

Farah adopts a feminist stance by depicting a strong girl character whose actions are very crucial in understanding the oppression of the female gender. In fact, Ebla's revolutionary movement from her rural family setting to the urban area of Mogadiscio is a good indication that Farah is committed to exposing oppressive treatment of girls and women to achieve female liberation. Significantly, Ebla's quest for liberation also points to the fact that the female gender is oppressed. Ebla wants her freedom. She is not happy that her cousin, like her grandfather, takes her in and determines to sell her "like a cattle" to a broker as a wife. On hearing this she flees again, this time to the city of Mogadiscio, where, despite seeking equality, she learns that to be a girl in Somalia means little in comparison to being a man. Therefore, in escaping the oppressive presence of masculinity, Ebla finds herself even more controlled by it. It is important to note that while escaping to Mogadiscio, Ebla finds herself powerless and solely dependent on men for survival.

Ebla flees Belet Wene with the widow's nephew (Awill) without the consent of her cousin. They settle together in Mogadiscio. In Bondhere (Mogadiscio) Ebla wants liberty, but learns that the society has been structured to limit her freedom. Yet, with all the struggles within her society, she pushes for her own equality. She finds herself questioning her society and the people around her.

As the plot develops, the readers see that patriarchal chains attempt to perpetually bind and cage Ebla. Ebla elopes with Awill on the advice of the widow, because she thinks that education and his experiences in the Italian colonial service have reshaped his cultural mentality about the female gender. Indeed, Awill turns out to be worse than the other men because he molests Ebla at their first night together.

> Ebla wanted to get out of bed and run away…. She also forgot Awill was in her way . . . but a woman never fought with a man, she should be submissive and never return his blows . . . Awill stood up straight and showered hard blows upon Ebla – in the mouth, at her head, on her belly. He gave her a kick or two on the belly and tried to bite her. Ebla did not cry, she wanted to, but she knew she should not. Awill grasped her by the plaited hair and pulled her down. Now he jumped over her and sat upon her belly, her body heaving underneath his. "You are my wife". He unknotted her dress and she raised no objections: she only moaned. He touched her head again. Did I hit you hard? (*From a Crooked Rib* 96-97).

At Mogadiscio, Awill attempts in vain to have sex with Ebla outside of wedlock. Ebla's refusal can be related to her acceptance of the association between honour and her body. In the novel, Ebla is raped and sexually molested by Awill. Even when her body is beaten and physically tortured by Awill (*From a Crooked Rib* 96–7), the girl, Ebla cannot react because her body is perceived as a mere property. The above discursive social construction is an act of rape which undermines Ebla's self-worth as an individual. Rape is a form of violence which attacks the emotional, physical and psychological well-being of a girl or a woman. This supports the notion

that rape as a form of gender-based violence is carried out because the victim is a girl; in other words, rape is not a "crime of sex but rather of power" (Woodhull 170).

The above-mentioned act of violence by Awill is a violation of Ebla's human rights since it is carried out without the consent of the protagonist. This is a clear indication that a girl's body is perceived as the man's material possession to be used whenever he likes. "She (Ebla) had bled and he (Awill) rejoiced seeing her blood, as his manhood depended upon breaking this chastity" (*From a Crooked Rib* 150). As a result of constant exploitation by men, Ebla desires to be a man: "She wished she were not a woman" (*From a Crooked Rib* 11), and "she wished that she could be…a man" (*From a Crooked Rib* 105). Her desire to be a man is as a result of the patriarchal powers that have controlled her life. Indeed, Ebla has been circumcised at an early age; she describes the act as "not only painful but a barbarous act" (*From a Crooked Rib* 149). The act of "slicing out her clitoris and stitching the lips together" (*From a Crooked Rib* 149) makes sexual enjoyment impossible because "pain due to tissue damage and scarring result in trapped or unprotected nerve ending" (Kaplan, Hechavarria, Martin and Bonhoure 1). According to Olawale Albert, "the cultural explanation for the practice of female circumcision, most especially excision and infibulation, is that it curbs sexual promiscuity by reducing the pleasures in sexual intercourse" (10).

The act of slicing out the clitoris is called female genital mutilation. World Health Organization (2008) quoted in Kaplan, Hechavarria, Martin and Bonhoure define "female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C) as procedures involving partial or total removal of external female genitalia or other injury to female organs for non-medical reasons" (1). Manal I. H. Mahmoud observes that "FGM has many health effects including recurrent urinary and vaginal infections, chronic pain, infertility, hemorrhaging, epidermoid cysts, and difficult labour. It has its psychological

impact and abnormalities in the female sexual function" (56). Farah seems to suggest that in Somalia, female genital mutilation is intended to tame the female gender's body in order to restrict its natural powers. Mahmoud goes further to explain that" female genital mutilation acts as a trial to manage women's sexual life by reducing their sexual desire, thus promoting chastity and fidelity" (56). This practice is encouraged by both women and men. Hence, the act of circumcision is aimed at prohibiting Ebla's active nature during sex. The consequence of Awill's action is that Ebla becomes psychologically and emotionally hurt after the rape. Ebla's recollection of the circumcision that caused her severe pain and nerve damage in childhood is examined to show the physical and psychological impact of such acts. After, the rape, Ebla becomes helplessly submerged in the river of male hegemony as a result of Awill's brutal acts.

In Mogadiscio, Ebla is faced with the problem of domestic violence and sexual abuse: "Awill stood up straight and showered hand blows upon Ebla – in the mouth at her head on her belly…" (*From a Crooked Rib* 96). Awill suppresses Ebla and exploits her sexually: "Awill moved towards her slowly, placed his hands on her breasts and touched them ... he succeeded in breaking the virginity of Ebla. She moaned and groaned … she bled a great deal…" (*From a Crooked Rib* 99). The definitive image of Awill as an Oedipal figurehead of oppression is evident in the above quotation. This is to say that Awill's act of rape denotes "Oedipus as the symbolic image of patriarchal subjugation; agent of power and paranoia" (Foucault xi).

The above act of rape motivates Ebla's hateful destructive superego. She is propelled to fight in order to retain her identity in a world where girls are molested, exploited, and sold like a cheap commodity. Reflecting on her life, Ebla sees that she has simply swapped one form of servitude for another and is as powerless and dependent on men as she was in her desert home. Ebla and other girls are merely sex slaves in the eyes of men; they are simply movable property to be

"sold like cattle." In Ebla, then, we are face to face with the view that "man cannot escape the consequences of his actions" (Nnolim, *Approaches*… 131). Ebla flees from patriarchal hegemony that subjugates girls, only to succumb to the same fate by eloping with Awill who is an epitome of patriarchal oppression.

In exploring *From a Crooked Rib*, the crux of the matter centers on the subtle method by which Farah presents his central theme: female abuse and oppression. At the beginning, he subtly makes the novel read like an escape novel, where the girl-child rejects all forms of patriarchal subjugations. But Farah's subtlety soon deepens in irony as Ebla's elopement with Awill causes a contradiction between her circumstances and expectations. Farah urges us to examine the situation critically, forcing us to wonder about the personality of Awill. According to the narrator "Awill makes love to Ebla, not with her, for seven days in the one-room apartment. Ebla thinks of this period as an imprisonment in the house" (*From a Crooked Rib* 114). The above act of violence by Awill is a violation of Ebla's human rights since it is carried out without her consent. "She (Ebla) had bled and he (Awill) rejoiced seeing her blood, as his manhood depended upon breaking this chastity" (*From a Crooked Rib*, 150). The above scene changes Ebla physically and psychologically— "She was no longer a virgin; she was a woman now, the wife of Awill‖" (*From a Crooked Rib* 100). This experience forcefully ushers her into a different phase of life as Awill's wife. In depicting the above act of violence, Nuruddin Farah has exposed and universalized the plight of rape victims in Somalia. Awill as the perpetrator of violence is not punished. In fact as a patriarchal figurehead, he goes ahead to forcefully arrange a marriage between him and Ebla. This is the level of impunity that Farah wants to explose.

Farah in depicting the predicament of Ebla also captures the misery girls experience as victims of sexual abuse in his novel, *Sardines* (1981). Amina, the girl protagonist in Farah's novel, *Sardines*

is sexually abused like Ebla. In fact, Amina's rapist just like Awill is not punished under the law; instead the victim is forced to marry the perpetrator. The narrator in Farah's *Sardine* explains what Amina's father told his daughter concerning her rape:

> Her father is so much helpless at the cruel dictates of the dictator that he could not protest against the rapists and is instead of it compelled to tell his daughter to forget about it. The rapists have not been punished but are at large for there in Somalia is no punishment for this crime her father is made to tell her daughter: "In this country rape is not punishable as other crimes of violence. The characteristic compromise arrived at is usually the rapist marries the victim, accepts her hand in marriage in the presence of the elders of his and her clan. (*Sardines* 256)

Amina Mama goes further to explain that "girls who are raped or violated are usually silent, because 'the occurrence of rape is trivialized" (52). According to Chiluwa,

> This suggests that any woman who reports such case may be made a laughing stock. It could be interpreted that the woman harassed the man sexually by being too pretty or by dressing seductively, in which case the 'helpless man' had no choice but to oblige her seductive insinuations by forcing her against her will. Thus the woman is to blame for man's unquenchable appetite.(114)

Chiluwa goes further to explain that the reasons why the violation of girls and women are not reported is because people usually welcome it with "silence, muteness, inaction, fault-finding, ascription of blame and the scapegoating of females in the manner of Delilah tempting and trapping Samson, as recorded by the Bible" (114).

In conclusion, the spurious patriarchal consciousness about marriage raised by Ebla's grandfather, Gheddi and Awill who represent the culture and tradition of Somali people is challenged by Farah through his girl protagonist. Farah depicts Ebla's struggles against different forms of patriarchy to create awareness on female oppression through forced marriage. Farah has adopted a feminist point of view which enables him to explore the experiences of his female protagonist. This is clearly evident in the development of his female character and the consciousness he imbues in her at the expense of the male characters (Grandfather, Gheddi,

Awill and Tiffo). The male characters are castigated, denigrated and presented as scoundrels in the novel. The point of view Farah adopts in depicting female experiences creates a clear picture which reveals that Farah empathizes more with his girl protagonist.

Female Assertiveness and Female Bonding as Strategies for Emancipation

Different forms of violence are catalysts that help to construct the consciousness, choices and responses of the female gender in any society. This leads to the adoption of survival strategies by girls and women to resist different territorialities of power that inhibit their freedom and overall well-being.

Escape is one of the strategies Ebla adopts for emancipation from male subjugation. Ebla escapes from her family's rural setting as well as Gheddi's house to avoid forced marriage. Ebla's resistance and determination is indeed alien to nomad culture because she is mandated to submit to the dictates of Somali culture. The narrator gives us a clue to Ebla's psychological disposition about Somali culture:

> Inside her, she knew why she wanted to escape. Actually it was more than a want: It was a desire, a desire stronger than anything, a thing to long for. Her escape meant her freedom. Her escape meant her life. Her escape meant the divine emancipation of the body and soul of a human being. (*From a Crooked Rib* 20)

Ebla's escape leads to examining the protagonist's struggle using the African feminists' aim to change the society through female revolt. In the editor's note on Catharine A. MacKinnon's "Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: An Agenda for Theory", it is observed that:

> Central to feminist theory and feminist method, as Catharine A. MacKinnon shows, is consciousness raising. Through this process, feminists confront the reality of women's condition by examining their experience and by taking this analysis as the starting point for individual and social change. By its nature, this method of inquiry challenges traditional notions of authority and objectivity and opens a dialectical questioning of existing power structures, of our own experience, and of theory itself. (515)

Ebla's escape signals the rejection of patriarchal modes of subjugation as manifested in forced marriage. This is why Ebla is more determined and assertive in her struggle for liberation. In fact, her escape from the patriarchal web of her grandfather and cousin (Gheddi) increases her awareness by uniting her with other female characters who resent the condition of the female gender.

Another strategy Farah proffers for female emancipation is female bonding. Okereke in "Feminist Consciousness…" observes that female bonding encourages female solidarity for the survival, growth and autonomy of women" (100). Female bonding as depicted by Farah suggests the coming together of the female characters (Asha, Ebla and the widow) to resist male chauvinism in order to liberate themselves. The friendship between the three female characters, Ebla, Asha and the Widow, depicts sisterhood. Ebla's friendship with these women leads to consciousness raising. In the novel, we see Asha and the widow educating Ebla on various strategies to escape patriarchal subjugation. Through the advice of the above-mentioned women, Ebla is able to take assertive decisions that further expose her to the complexity of human experiences.

Significantly, Farah wants Ebla and the other women characters to explore their worldview free from male chauvinism. This is the consciousness that Farah raises in *From a Crooked Rib*. MacKinnon observes that,

> Consciousness raising is the major technique of analysis, structure of organization, method of practice, and theory of social change of the women's movement. In consciousness raising, often in groups, the impact of male dominance is concretely uncovered and analyzed through the collective speaking of women's experience, from the perspective of that experience. (519-20)

Asha and the Widow are two independent female characters that Farah created to explore their worldview and freedom without being controlled by men. To empower his protagonist, Farah

allows these women to educate and inspire Ebla in her journey of emancipation. The friendship between the widow and Ebla marks an important phase in the development and empowerment of Ebla as a girl character. The widow's advice and stories form a consciousness which helps Ebla to have a unique approach to tackling the subjugation of the female gender. The widow's story about her Arabic husband whom she likens to a donkey as a result of his jealous nature helps in sharpening Ebla's mental awareness. The widow's friendship with Ebla symbolizes the bond women and girls share in their burdens as a result of gender discrimination and violence which hold them in bondage. Their friendship indeed helps to create a space for them to discuss their experiences outside the patriarchal context. The above statement supports Elaine Showalter's view that "women's culture forms a collective experience within the cultural whole, an experience that binds women writers to each other over time and space" ("Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness..." 260).

The emotional involvement of the reader in Ebla's plight is inescapable when the widow reveals Gheddi's plan to marry Ebla off to another man. In the second movement of the plot, the widow rescues Ebla from the vicious web of patriarchy by informing her about the broker who has tuberculosis and his cousin's plan to marry her off to him. Ebla's pathetic plight forces the widow to contemplate on the oppression of girls and their fate in Somalia. She expresses her feelings to Ebla:

> But that is what we women are – just like cattle, properties of someone or other, either your parents or your husband . . . .We are human beings . . . But our people don‟t realise it. What is the difference between a cow and yourself now? Your hand has been sold to a broker (*From a Crooked Rib* 80).

The role of the widow as a character is very important in Ebla's development and feminist consciousness. The widow as a character in the novel is a fictional representation of a

psychologically and socially plausible person. Ebla, who is the oppressed is the performer of actions in the story. The importance of the widow as a secondary character is that she helps Ebla to develop and understand her situation as a girl-child. The widow tells Ebla, "… have you heard, Ebla? You have not heard? Are you sure? I don't know...but what is it anyway. That your cousin has given your hand to a broker?" (*From a Crooked Rib* 78). The widow's role as a character is essential because she serves as a supporting character whose role in the story is to alert Ebla to realize her status. Also, the widow's revelation helps in awakening Ebla's consciousness on the fate of the girl-child. This feminist consciousness is evident in Ebla's response: "I don't like this sort of marriage…. I don't want to be sold like cattle...we are human beings…" (*From a Crooked Rib* 79-80). Ebla detests the way her family members hegemonize her for their selfish aims to the detriment of her physical and emotional well-being. Hartman throws more light on Ebla's plight by explaining that "men's position in patriarchy and capitalism prevents them from recognizing both human needs for nurturance, sharing, and growth, and the potential for meeting those needs in a non-hierarchical, non-patriarchal society" (24).

In Farah's creation of characters, he places the male characters to have control over the female characters. This indeed heightens Ebla's assertiveness for self-liberation. In presenting Ebla's assertive nature towards men's oppressive treatment, Farah exposes Awill's deceitful and oppressive nature who after raping Ebla travels to Italy on a false promise of returning soon. Awill's deceptive nature leaves Ebla emotionally drained with a traumatic sexual memory that fuels her consciousness. Awill's sexual encounter with a white woman in Italy exposes Ebla further to the unending injurious nature of patriarchy. Dar clarifies the above and maintains that:

> Men subscribe to the ideology that they need woman only for that opportune moment at which they are in exigent need of feeding their hungry animal desires and appetites. Once they have achieved the orgasm by dilapidating the spiritual equanimity and physical poise of women at the altar of enjoyment they let them to dogs. Awill in the novel toes the line

> of this sadistic philosophy by satiating his lust on devouring the fragile bodies of the two women who after that lets them down without any thought, concern and care. Nuruddin Farah deftly and boldly exposes the rank self-centredness and swinish nature of men in Somalia. (2276)

In reading *From a Crooked Rib,* one is struck by the empathy Farah has for the female characters, especially Ebla. Farah deliberately fashions these experiences to create an ideology that empathizes with the female gender as an oppressed class, as observed by Showalter in the criticism of how traditional culture subjugates and oppresses girls and women. Farah presents Ebla as weak and passive when Awill molestes her. However, Farah imbues Ebla with some elements of resistance and courage produced by emotional turmoil or depression caused by patriarchs. Ebla becomes very aggressive in her fight against patriarchy when she discovers that Awill cheats on her in Italy. She takes revenge on her husband (Awill) by marrying another man called Tiffo.

Ebla's second marriage is her own strategy for resisting oppressive male jingoism. Ebla's decision is in line with Virginia Woolf's feminist ideology in *A Room of One's Own* which stipulates that literary texts should be explored by looking at how the female character deals with cultural hegemony as an agent of change for liberation. Ebla's superego is evident in her aggressive need to retaliate Awill's act of infidelity. This aggressive superego is the psychic agency that produces her sense of the ideal, the way situations ought to be in her relationships, and not just the way they are. Freud sees the origin of this aggressive superego to be the "internalization of castration by Oedipal figureheads" (Eagleton 135). In fact, the aggressiveness of Ebla's superego in her act of revenge depicts lack of morals that nearly consumes her.

Ebla's marriage to Tiffo is wrapped in deceit. As a married man, Tiffo has two daughters who are Ebla's age-mates. Both Ebla and Tiffo are aware of their marital status before their marriage.

Tiffo's interest is to exploit Ebla's body, while Ebla's target is to control Tiffo's sexual emotions. Ebla's marriage to Tiffo is also a revolutionary strategy to obstruct the patriarchal structural mode of living which allows a woman to marry one husband. Ebla's marriage to Tiffo is also a strategy to seek for equality and exploit him as a man. When Tiffo attempts to humiliate and exploit Ebla, her assertive nature pushes her to challenge him: "You have another wife and I have another husband. We are even: you are a man and I am a woman, so we are equal. You need me and I need you. We are equal" (*From a Crooked Rib* 145). The above statement by Ebla is important in highlighting the question of human action. Ebla's struggle to maintain a balanced relationship with Tiffo is "because her body plays an important role in her essence" (De Beavoir 139).

Through Ebla's words and action, Farah is geared towards giving the female gender agency. Charmaine Pereira (2003) quoted in Chiluwa makes an addition to the issue of female sexuality, exposing issues of "sexual bargaining and negotiation of sex and power between men and women"(123). Pereira equally observes that "feminism is about mind transformation of men and women; it is not about the struggle to edge out male dominance. The mind-transforming aspect of women's struggle is very important, if female subjugation is to be phased out. Men and women need to have a better understanding of what complementary relationship entails and take responsibility to make it work" (qtd. in Chiluwa 123).

In the novel, Ebla's sexuality serves as a focal point of oppression and subjugation of girls and women. Her assertive statement cautions Tiffo against any form of exploitation. The equality that Ebla seeks in the quotation— "We are even: you are a man and I am a woman, so we are equal. You need me and I need you. We are equal" (*From a Crooked Rib* 145) seems to embrace the "womanist ideology of togetherness in differences" (Chiluwa 119). It is important to note

that Ebla's attempt to assert her freedom is through the feminist ideology known as womanism. Ebla's quest for equality of sex in marriage is because she is against any form of suppressive mode that causes dominance. This is indeed the goal of feminists (womanists).

More importantly, the focus on Ebla as the protagonist of the novel helps the readers to understand her thoughts, challenges and modes of resistance. Ebla's boldness and resistance against Tiffo's jingoistic attitude could be attributed to her friendship with Asha. The role of Asha in building Ebla's consciousness and ideological shifts is indeed undebatable. Asha, an urban and independent woman, exposes Ebla to the survival strategies against men in the city without the knowledge of her husband. She educates Ebla on gender equality thereby taking a stance that both men and women have the same value. Through Asha's advice, Ebla is able to understand the real meaning of equality which encourages the equal treatment of persons irrespective of biological, social or cultural differences. According to the narrator:

> Ebla, little by little, learnt the background of Asha, who she deemed the most interesting character she had met since she left the country. Ebla could not help being fond of Asha, because she was the first person who had ever considered her equal: she made Ebla aware of what she was. (*From a Crooked Rib* 121)

Asha sees men like Tiffo and Awill as patriarchal figures who abuse female sexuality. From the foregoing, the term "patriarchy", as a notion, is highly examined within feminist and gender studies. Therefore, Farah seems to suggest that the origin of this notion comes "… with the patriarch as the head of the family or tribe or the church" (Andermahr, 193). Asha challenges patriarchy by supporting Ebla to get married to two men at the same time. Her ideology is centered on resisting unfair discriminatory practices against the female gender. This ideology also helps Ebla to fight against sexist oppression by questioning and opposing them. Asha is the brain behind Ebla's marriage with Tiffo. According to her, since a man has the right to have

more than one wife then, the woman also has the right to have more than one husband. Asha's statement supports the underlying quest of feminists to have equal treatment of men and women in society. One thing is very important while exploring Ebla's quest for emancipation — her final resolution to confront her obstacles and reclaim her freedom.

One of the most interesting instances of Ebla's quest for emancipation is when she hides that she is already married from a man wooing her. She even marries him (Tiffo), despite being the wife of Awill. She declares that, in case her lies are found out, then "it is a man's trouble" (*From a Crooked Rib* 125). Tiffo on his part hides his marriage of eighteen years from Ebla until after they are married, and Ebla is simply reduced to being his mistress. While contemplating about her life, she realizes that she is powerless and decides to take control of her life. First, she tells Asha to stay out of her relationship, and then she reveals to Tiffo that she is also married, and that she wants a divorce. On hearing of Awill's return, she confronts him about his affair with the Italian lady and determines to bear the consequences of her actions.

Ebla's decision is strongly connected to her superego which acts as an internal judge, and punishes her ego with feelings of guilt. Indeed, Ebla's feelings of pride and heightened self-esteem are the cause of her quest for perfection and satisfaction. This quest allows the structured models of the id, ego and superego to be in conflict with each other. This explains why Ebla's ego adopts repression, projection and displacement as defence mechanisms to protect her when she is not capable of coping with the stress of her actions. In her adoption of 'displacement' as a defence mechanism, we see Ebla satisfying her impulse by releasing frustration on Tiffo, her second husband instead of Awill, her oppressor. This act is socially unacceptable since it contravenes Somalia's religious traditional law of marriage. A man can marry more than one woman; but in Ebla's situation, the reverse is the case.

Farah in tracing Ebla's experiences from her rural settlement to the urban environment seems to suggest that depression or emotional trauma is the basic stimulant for his protagonist's abnormal decisions. Dodhy explains that "horrific incidents happen to a wide range of people, casting long-term effects on survivors of such happenstances" (74). Caruth argues that "any deviation from a healthy or normal structure or function cannot be defined by the traumatic event itself, since it may or may not be catastrophic, and may not traumatize individuals in the same way" (*Trauma*… 4). Caruth further stresses that the issue of pathology can be defined as a distortion of a given traumatic event because it haunts the victims by distorting personal significances attached to the event (*Trauma*… 4). In Caruth's view, "pathology is dependent on the structure of its experience or reception. Therefore, the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated *possession* of the one who experiences it" (*Trauma*… 4).

In the novel, Ebla's past repeated oppressive and violent experiences with men cause a psychological trauma which pushes her to deviate from societal norms. Ebla becomes a social misfit by manipulating and marrying two men at the same time; she reveals to her second husband (Tiffo) the truth and declares: "You have another wife, and I have another husband. We are even" (*From a Crooked Rib* 145). Ebla is indeed unhappy with her life. She becomes a social misfit stuck in her act of resentful vengeance and resistance of patriarchal figures. Ebla is a trickster in the novel, *From a Crooked Rib*. She conceals the secret knowledge of her first marriage with Awill and marries a second husband (Tiffo) to break conventional social rules and behaviours. In mythology or the study of folklore, Lewis Hyde sees a trickster as an archetypal character that acts as a "boundary crosser" (2). Paul Mattick also observes that tricksters "violate principles of social and natural order, playfully disrupting normal life and then re-establishing it on a basis" (2). In essence, "a trickster serves as a transformer and culture hero who creates order

out of chaos. He may teach humans skills of survival… through negative examples that end with his utter failure to accomplish his task" ("Tricksrer" www.britannica.com/art/ trickster-tale).

In the novel, Ebla is a trickster because she questions patriarchal discriminative and oppressive law of marriage in Somalia. Ebla's marriage with two menat the same time defies Somalia's religious tradition. This very act places Ebla as a trickster. Ebla's deviation from Somalia's marriage law shows that she has similarities with other human tricksters in many African cultures because she opposes authority and thwarts men's exploitative plans. To give voice to the female characters, Farah deviates from the tradition of adopting male character as tricksters. He uses a female character who breaks traditional rules to mock patriarchal authority in the novel. Ebla as a trickster exhibits foolishness in her act of revenge against men. The same body she protects by rejecting an old man as a suitor in the beginning of the novel is willingly kept for another old man (Tiffo) to exploit. This is indeed a crime against her body. In depicting Ebla's folly, Farah seems to depict that a girl has the right to control her body the way she likes and not the other way round.

Ebla's story of struggle and resistance is indeed a picaresque adventure. In the story, Ebla becomes pregnant while married to different men. Ebla meets a ludicrous end, because she is faced with the burning issues of paternity and public shame. These tragic processes – Ebla's Oedipal guilt of flouting religious traditional law of marriage and her shameful pregnancy contribute in strengthening the ego in the task of regulating *eros* and *superego* aggression so that they do not clash with reality and defuse. By this, Farah allows 'projection' as a defence mechanism to push Ebla's ego to resolve the internal and external conflicts by attributing her unacceptable emotions and thoughts to Asha, the independent city woman and Tiffo. This explains why Ebla rejects Asha's friendship and divorces Tiffo.

Significantly, Ebla's *ego* with the help of *eros* is able to modify aggression by displacement, restriction, sublimation and fusion. Sublimation occurs when Ebla satisfies her impulse by releasing frustration directed on Tiffo to her first husband (Awill) in a socially accepted manner. Upon her first husband's arrival, Ebla's Oedipal guilt forces her to divorce Tiffo who impregnated her, and to concentrate on her first marriage in order to conceal her pregnancy. One thing is very clear – Ebla makes an urgent decision of reconciling with Awill to save her face and her unborn baby from humiliation. By this very act, Ebla saves herself from the aggressive death instinct, as manifested in her harsh self-abusive superego. As Freud has asserted the formation of this superego is deeply rooted in Oedipal desire which is refined by "social and cultural prerequisite" (Eagleton 136).

Farah exposes Ebla's destructive revolutionary stance and assertiveness when she marries two men, and is willing to marry more, refusing the Islamic religious tradition that situates her as a mere possession to be owned and exploited by men. As a matter of fact, Ebla's attack on the institution of marriage is seen in her act of marrying two men. Lauretta Ngcobo gives more insight on Farah's attack on the Somalia social milieu. According to Ngcobo,

> A writer observes and interprets the norms, the values and the customs of society. He or she affirms or negates those values according to his or her personal convictions. In this way he/she creates or destroys social values. His/her interpretation will depend largely on his/her vantage point and could say public opinion one way or another. (qtd in Akingbe 25)

Farah has remarkably depicted the experiences of Ebla to raise awareness of cultural oppressive situations, demonstrating their psychological consequences on the protagonist and other characters. Farah seems to suggest that oppressive and discriminatory behaviours are responsible for the abnormal attitudes of the marginalized class in society. This explains why he gives his major character (Ebla) voice in a society that has made her voiceless. Ebla's revolutionary stance

is very evident in her confession to Tiffo: “You have another wife, and I have another husband. We are even” (*From a Crooked Rib* 145). This can be referred to as oratorical power, a stance which is rarely seen in novels written by African male novelists. The voice Farah gives to Ebla exposes her psychological disposition towards male oppression and subjugation.

Ebla uses her oratorical power and resistance to challenge her Islamic religion and culture. She therefore voices her strong opinion on the humiliation of the female gender and thus says, “our religion is very strict towards women….The concessions given to men are far too great” (*From a Crooked Rib* 154). The above statement reveals Ebla’s bitterness against a religion that gives undue power to men over the female gender. Ebla sees religion and Somali culture as the domain of man. She rejects also the Islamic notion that “a woman’s prophet and second-to-God is her husband” (*From a Crooked Rib* 151). This very notion gives men a superior position which reflects in the way they treat and value the female gender. Godwin Emezue observes that “the African social, political and economic environment is still bedeviled with inequality between the sexes and inequality in the distribution of the nation’s commonwealth…” (49).

In her search for a new and independent life, Ebla frees herself from all the constraints put on her body by patriarchy; she emphatically declares, “I am master of myself” (*From a Crooked Rib 142*). This mastery of her body is the outcome of her un-writing the patriarchal image in order to recreate the feminine image. In recreating a new mentality about her personality, she exclaims, “this is my treasure, my only treasure, my bank, my money, my existence” (*From a Crooked Rib* 160). This confession is as a result of the dehumanizing experiences which have impinged on her rights as a young girl controlled by both religious and social patriarchal figureheads. As Ebla determines to protect herself against men and tradition, she sees her body as a precious asset owned by herself, not by her family or husband. Ebla knows that she owns her body which she

must control or use the way she likes in order to be satisfied in life. As such, Ebla employs her body as a manipulative tool in controlling men.

To further show her determination in promoting the image of the female gender, Ebla makes a remark when Asha, her friend, pours a cup of tea for her. She (Ebla) takes a sip of the tea and exclaims, "it seems to taste like a man". Ebla takes another mouthful of tea and confesses, "it seems to taste better like a woman" (*From a Crooked Rib*, 123). Farah, like Nawal el Saadawi and Mariama Ba, artistically recreates the inferior status of girls and women in Somali society in *From a Crooked Rib.*

Ebla as a trickster who meets a ludicrous end is very evident in the quotation here: "She wondered then if she had ever been on the right track. She had been reticent all her life, because it turned out that her opinions were different from what others expected. That proves either that I am an exceptional idiot, or the reverse" (*From a Crooked Rib* 123).The above statement is assertive in nature because Ebla and other Somali young girls and women, have reached the point of feminist development, where they realize that the body of either girl or boy is both written by oneself and on behalf of oneself.

Ebla's experiences are categorized under gender-based violence because Somali cultural tradition and religion are simply directed against the female gender. The narrator tells us that "Ebla loved life. To her life was freedom" (*From a Crooked Rib*,126). Ebla's quest is to revolt against her husband (Awill) and free herself from subjugation; this particular quest forces her to accept Asha's offer to get married to a secret husband called Tiffo. Ebla's secret marriage is an emotional flight to detach her feelings from Awill. Thus, in the new marriage, Ebla controls Tiffo by negotiating the amount to be paid for the sexual escapade. This is the kind of power that Ebla seeks. In the second marriage, Ebla only wants the power to control so as to humiliate Awill.

By this act, psychoanalysis presents the oppressive superego as a revengeful aggressor that produces the utopian ideals which turn to self-abuse when the ideals are not achieved.

Ebla's marriage with Tiffo drives her to self-examination and deep reflection. Through Ebla's speech, the reader x-rays the false consciousness which has blinded her mode of reasoning towards male chauvinism. Ebla reflects on her experiences and comes to the conclusion that she is still trapped in the web of men. She escapes from the old man, Giumaleh, only to end up with another old man (Tiffo). She becomes aware of her position and thus confesses her dealings with men: "Giumaleh, I never saw him. It was only verbally done between him and my grandfather. Diris made an arrangement with my cousin…. Awill was the only husband I married willingly…" (*From a Crooked Rib* 158).

Ebla thinks of *eros* as a life-preserving force, and rejects her idealistic *superego* as the self-aggressor, urging a death instinct which denies cordial relationship. Ebla's pregnancy opens a new phase of emotional struggle (Oedipal guilt) — "she just wanted to know whose baby it was she had in her womb…" (*From a Crooked Rib* 165). Ebla's pregnancy gives her the opportunity to question her achievements throughout her struggle and relationship with Tiffo. She divorces Tiffo to negotiate a space in her first marriage. The return of Awill from Italy opens another space for negotiation between sexes based on the conflict of infidelity. When Awill finds out that Ebla has knowledge of his sexual scandal in Europe, he becomes more subtle in his discussion with her:

> 'You know how you were created?' Awill asked smiling.
> 'Yes I know.'
> Let me tell you that you were created from the crooked rib of Adam…'
> 'And if anyone tries to straighten it, he will have to break it.' (*From a Crooked Rib* 170)

The above quotation depicts the resolution of conflict in the novel. Both Awill and Ebla are able to accept their fate because they have understood that no one is indispensable. Ebla's acceptance of Awill is simply because she is incapacitated with her pregnancy. Awill on his part is sex-starved and could not wait to explore Ebla's body. Ebla readily accepts Awill to avert the curses her grandfather placed on her. This situation leads to forgiveness as they negotiate spaces to accommodate themselves. Their reunion is celebrated in a unique sexual romance that resolves the tension and conflicts that characterize the story. The end of the story seems to project Farah as a promoter of complementarity ideology. Farah's adoption of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's stance as a complementarist aligns with Ebla's realization of Awill's role as the father of her unborn child and her role to satisfy his sexual pleasures.

Farah advocates forgiveness and cooperation as a womanist ideology. Obviously, in *From a Crooked Rib*, Farah advocates a harmonious complementarity between men and women in society. According to Adimora-Ezeigbo, "the need for men and women to forge a closer relationship based on mutual understanding and respect is the general idea holding these stories together" (qtd. in Arndt, "Paradigms…" 41). Adimora-Ezeigbo further explains that 'complementarity is the secret of peaceful living and good relationship, that is, the need for men and women to complement one another and build one another up' (41-42). Significantly, Farah's novel projects a definitive image of forgiveness and reconciliation as Ebla allows herself to be reterritorialized.

Furthermore, Nuruddin Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* is a feminist novel because it explores and recognizes the claims of the female gender for equal rights with men – "sexual, legal, political, economic, social, marital, et cetera" (Nnolim, *Issues*… 135). Farah adopts both radical and womanist feminist ideologies that have communal tenets which are hinged on the African

philosophy of thoughts. Farah imbues Ebla with the rebellious attitude of feminism for female emancipation. Ebla's radicalism is seen in her journey of escape from patriarchal oppression. As a male creative writer, Farah's feminist ideology is black centered and accommodationist. He believes in the freedom and independence of the female gender, but also supports cooperation between African men and women for peaceful coexistence. Farah rejects female subjugation and maltreatment by advocating for change in males' sexist stance against girls and women. This explains why his feminist plots ends with a move for negotiation and unity of male and female – indeed, Ebla reconciles with her husband (Awill) at the end of the novel. One thing is clear – Farah's womanist stance is forced; it is achieved because Islamic religious background stresses the need for female submission to patriarchal authority.

In conclusion, Farah presents religion and culture as major agents of patriarchy which are against Ebla. This is also true of Ba's protagonist, Ramatoulaye in *So Long a Letter*. By focusing on religion and tradition, Farah and Ba seem to suggest the kind of feminism that would be suitable in Islamic regions. It seems certain, then, that Farah's novel depicts the portrait of a girl caught in the web of tradition and individual freedom. Paradoxically, the novel is termed a feminist novel because Farah makes social commentary on the experiences of girls and women in Somalia. In this study, Ebla's plight and journey of escape is symbolic and metaphorical – it represents the futile journey of all girls and women in their quest to revolt against patriarchy which is instituted in the religion and culture of Somalia. In essence, the nature of Somalia as an Islamic nation does not allow total freedom for the female gender.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN IKECHUKWU ASIKA'S *TAMARA*

Domestic violence is one of the most difficult problems that affect most societies today. Albert observes that "it is a hidden problem… because women hardly confess that they are assaulted by their spouses since such matters are supposed to be a private problem" (67). United Nations in *Strategies for Confronting Domestic Violence: A Resource Manual* defines domestic violence to mean "…incidents of physical attack, when it may take the form of physical and sexual violations, such as pushing, pinching, spitting, kicking….The result of such physical violence can range from bruising to killing; what may often start out as apparently minor attacks can escalate both in intensity and frequency" (qtd. in Albert 67). Albert further observes that "domestic violence also includes psychological or mental violence consisting of constant verbal insults, harassment, denouncement by spouses of one another, confinement, child abuse or neglect etc" (67).

The above issues border on the violation of human rights to ensure submission and subjugation of the victims. The aspects emphasized in the above definition on domestic violence are evident in Asika's *Tamara*. This research explores *Tamara* to investigate the issues of domestic violence, trafficking, sexual abuse and prostitution as the violation of the rights of the girl child.

Domestic Violence in the Familial Context

Asika uses fiction to elucidate the abusive treatment of the girl child, unfolding various oppressive conditions which stifle her existence and self-actualization in the family. Asika's female protagonist is a young girl (Tamara) who could not transcend beyond the limitation imposed on her by her abusive father. In fact, Tamara is verbally abused, assaulted, silenced and reduced to the lowest rung of the ladder by her father simply because she is a girl.

In *Tamara*, family life is grossly violated in the relationships between Tamara's father and other members of the family. Tamara's world as a girl child is damnably repressive since she is constantly surrounded by protective walls in her father's compound. Tamara's father is very rich and influential. He is also well-respected in his community for being a philanthropist. However, his actions remain obscure in the novel as he vacillates between humanity and domestic violence. He provides financial support, but most of the time, he inflicts emotional and psychological pain on his wife and children. His family lives a regimented life marked by constant fear – fear of an authoritative and unaccommodating father. He regiments their lives through seclusion, forced siesta, verbal abuse, study sessions and rigid adherence to rules.

Sexism is replete in the novel. Tamara's father represents a patriarchal figure who believes that boys and men are inherently superior to girls and women. This is seen in the different treatment he gives to his children. Tamara confesses to the above discrimination based on sex:

> We have timetables and schedules for everything we do and the training we receive. My brother was towing a different line of training and upbringing as a man and I was strictly being raised as a girl and that was why, though we stay in the same house and sleep under the same roof, our paths never crossed much like children who stay in the same house do. (*Tamara* 8)

The fact that Tamara's father does not allow his wife to visit friends or neighbours is a clear indication that the female gender is disadvantaged in his house. Kizito (his son) is given the liberty to explore life by leaving the house without his father's permission (*Tamara* 33); while Tamara and her mother are confined in the house. This unequal opportunity arising from patriarchal cultural dominance of the female gender is indeed psychologically damaging. In order to assert her freedom, Tamara acquires new traits to deviate from her father's mapped out gender role of being vulnerable to men's sexual quest. Tamara defies her father's expectation and assumption of girls behaving in accordance with cultural expectations – that girls must stay

at home to protect them from the preying eyes of men. The above assumption contributes to sexism in society by promoting violence at home.

In the novel, it is ironic that the young girl the father seems to be protecting is sexually exploited at home by the family driver (Dunga). Obviously, this treatment by Tamara's father based on gender has psychological consequences – his wife dies of heart attack because she could not cope with her husband's overbearing attitude towards her and their children (*Tamara* 28). This attitude by Tamara's father is referred to as spousal violence in the home, because he (Tamara's father) as the abuser needs to assert greater power in his interpersonal relationship with his wife to maintain a "superior position as the head of the family" (Kashani and Allan 33).

In the novel, this spousal violence manifests in persistent verbal abuse by Tamara's father denigrating the personality and self-worth of his wife – "woman, what's the meaning of this? Speak now or forever speak no more" (*Tamara*, 25)! The situation that results to verbal abuse does not require the use of hurtful words; his wife is simply humiliated because she is entertaining their children with moral stories (*Tamara* 25). Tamara's mother emphasizes that the reason for telling their children folktales is because they are bored and need counselling. The patriarchal kingship trait surfaces in Tamara's father through his statement to his wife:

> Counsel them, when did you become a counselor? If they had need for one, I am their father, I will willingly provide them one, not you. And you are here telling them animal stories, fairy tales, and nonsensical folktales and songs! Look at all of you dancing like slaves released from the chains of slavery! Just take a good look at all of you! Of what relevance will folktales make in their lives? Of what relevance are animal stories, fabricated, barbaric and outdated tales to them? (*Tamara* 25)

Tamara is also psychologically and emotionally affected as a result of her father's abusive words. She confesses: "that was how we disappeared with our hearts in our hand, crushed and stepped upon. That was the last time we stayed together as a family and listened to my mother's endless

stories" (*Tamara* 25). Tamara as a girl is not excluded from the emotional torture in the house. She is also a victim of verbal violence. Tamara's happy moment turns into emotional pain when she waits endlessly one night to impress her father with her excellent performance at school. "What the hell are you doing at this time of the night? …What about your report card? Speak before I skin you alive" (*Tamara* 15)! One thing is certain – Tamara escapes from the house after the death of her mother in search of good companionship because she could not bear her father's abusive nature. In psychoanalysis, we can say that Tamara's quest for freedom unconsciously involves her abusive and self-destructive superego, the inward traumatic pressure of her childhood memory.

Tamara is a victim of parental authority. She allows her father's attitude to deny her the most crucial part of her 'pleasure principle' – parental love termed emotional reality. In the novel, 'superego fear' replaces 'castration fear' which is caused by the threatening paternal attitude of Tamara's father. Asika explores the psychological origin of assertiveness in *Tamara* through the concept of superego as an individual agency of internal conflict. In fact, the repression of *eros* (life instinct) in the novel causes the release of superego aggression that is self-abusive and destructive to the protagonist. We become very aware of Tamara's inner thoughts through her confession in the letter, which indeed exposes her inner conflicts clearly. Throughout the novel, Tamara embarks on a quest to repress this internal conflict which harbours self-destructive instincts. It is important to note that Tamara's inner tensions and feelings of powerlessness over her oppressive condition are the major factors that forced her self-destructive superego into reality. In fact, the violent abusive behaviour of Tamara's father seems to be the major cause of Tamara's internal conflict.

In the novel, Tamara's father assumes that absolute strictness towards his family would shape them into better citizens, but, this ironically, inflicts physical and psychological pain on them. In the letter, Tamara makes a sensitive and absorbing confession: "Father….You guided us so hard until it began to pain and we all missed direction and lost tracks" (*Tamara* 11). Tamara not only struggles with a conflicting attitude of fear and hatred towards her father, but also suffers emotional instability in her quest for freedom and love. Tamara confesses: "Amdist riches and affluence, I was alone, so empty and unfulfilled. There were about many things I lacked, things miles away from what money can buy, most especially love, tender care, motivation, freedom and encouragement" (*Tamara,* 10). From the above quotation, Tamara's superego aggression is directed against her father; the effectual feeling in this unconscious aggression is externalized as rebellious hatred. On this level, *Tamara* is a novel about conflict between a father and his daughter. Asika represents this conflict as an inward feeling, reinforced by an Oedipal destructive family relationship whose psychic agility violates the protagonist's psychic wholeness.

Asika's representation of Tamara's childhood memory sustains the fact that childhood experiences contribute in shaping the mentality of a person in adulthood. Obviously, Tamara's childhood memory about her father is not a good one; her struggle to liberate herself from the emotional trauma associated with her father's attitude plunges her into grievous mistakes and deep sorrow. According to Tamara, "I hardly knew you as a child. It took me years to memorize your face and fix it properly in my memory. I still doubt that you are the same man whose smiling pictures hung everywhere around the house" (*Tamara* 11). In Tamara herself, hate and rebellion are consuming powerful passions that characterize her childhood – hatred for her father's attitude and the quest for self-assertiveness or freedom.

Asika explores her protagonist's response to abusive family relationship which is captured from the point of view of the narrator (Tamara). As soon as Tamara starts narrating her story, we are conscious of seeing her father as he is described by the narrator.

> I am writing to tell you those things I had stood before you to tell you but fumbled for lack of words because the looks of a tiger on your face could not allow me speak. Father, if wishes could kill, you would have been dead by now. Many times I had locked myself in my room and wished all the bad things of life to come upon you…hoping you would someday turn to me, but you never did. Even those days you watched me sail away, you made no effort to stop me. You were too busy to take notice of the plight of your only daughter. (*Tamara* 5)

It is from the narrator's report that the reader begins to suspect that the letter is concerned with more complex conflicts that hamper the physical, emotional and psychological growth of the narrator. The beginning of the letter does not merely communicate about Tamara's father; it tells us about the narrator's willingness to narrate her painful experience and ask for forgiveness: "I am writing to purge my heart and ask you for a special favour, the last from a father to a daughter" (*Tamara* 6). Tamara's description of her father creates a general disgust which muddles the reader's sense of judgment. The readers wonder if the unpleasant values of her father are so severe to cause emotional pain, when Tamara writes:

> I understood perfectly, as tender as I was that you are a very busy man, a no nonsense man, a father who can never tolerate a mother and two kids even at the sight of most minute provocation. I knew you are a very strict father, a great disciplinarian, insisting even at a gun point that things must be done your way. (*Tamara,* 8)

Admittedly, it is encouraging to find that considerations of parental behaviour weigh more than social behaviour. An implied judgment is that the family, as the basic unit of the society should create a good environment for the positive growth of a child, but the opposite seems to be the case in Tamara's family. How else can the reader describe the narrator's inability to praise her father's attitude? Tamara narrates: "I still doubt that you are the same man whose smiling pictures hung everywhere around the house. Those pictures are quite different from that of the

stone-faced looking man, steaming of thunder and brimstone, that comes back most evenings when almost the whole household has fallen asleep…"(*Tamara* 11).

It is obvious that the standpoint from which Tamara judges her father is a purely moral standpoint. Tamara's father is judged solely in accordance with the way he fails to raise his children properly with love and special understanding. Tamara comments: "How I wish you realized earlier, …that your fathership style was wrong, all wrong, father and never to be used again anywhere in this world of flesh and blood except in fiction…" (*Tamara* 11). The above quotation suggests that the protagonist's father is the proudest, most disagreeable man in the world. The reasons are not hard to find because, his words and attitude are unfit for his wife and children. He does not allow his children to make new acquaintances; they only speak to members of the family and schoolmates.

Now, it is true that the narrator's father does not make a favourable impression on the readers as a result of his mean attitude towards his family. The readers, indeed, tend to sympathize with Tamara in her harsh criticism of him. We sympathize with Tamara when her mother dies and her only brother (Kizito) runs away from the house leaving her to face the wrath of an abusive father. Tamara narrates:

> With my mother and brother gone, I knew I was never to become the same person I wanted to be. The house was so empty and for months, my dreams were filled with the thoughts of my mother and my only brother, and I wished the wind could bring them back to me. For years, I waited at the balcony for the gate to be flung open and usher in my mother…. (*Tamara* 32)

Asika has implied a strong critical feeling towards the personality of Tamara's father, and his values. Tension and fear are enacted within the family setting as physical and psychological violence are experienced by the characters. By implying such an attitude towards the

protagonist's father, Asika has suggested that his overbearing attitude is behind his daughter's quest for moral support and companionship. This has thus pointed forward to later developments in the novel and her journey to escape. It is important to note that, psychological (emotional) violence and isolation are strongly connected to domestic violence because they reflect certain behaviours in an intimate or non-intimate relationship, which can cause physical, sexual or psychological harm, including physical aggression, sexual coercion and psychological abuse. The consequences of these forms of violence on the girl-child may include both fatal and non-fatal injuries, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, unintended pregnancies and other related health issues such as sexually transmitted diseases etc. The above views are explicitly depicted by Asika in his novel, *Tamara*, to expose the rhythmic violent rise and fall of the protagonist.

In *Tamara*, Asika adopts a satirical tone in documenting the experiences of a young girl (Tamara) whose childhood experiences leave nothing, but a painful memory of her father's inhuman and nonchalant attitude towards her, Kizito (her brother) and their mother. Asika focuses on satirizing the materialistic nature of parents who devote more time in pursing material possession to the detriment of their children's psychological and emotional well-being. The plot of the novel revolves around Tamara, a lonely girl, who is always locked up with her brother, Kizito, and their helpless mother by a strict father and husband. Their lives at their lonely mansion, although very comfortable and seemingly stable, is an unhappy one with Tamara, Kizito and their mother living in constant fear of an emotionally abusive and authoritarian father and husband. Tamara laments: "we were not allowed to visit anyone and no one visited us, alone you confined us in a big house, fending for us, lavishing all sorts of wealth" (*Tamara* 21).

In the novel, Tamara's mother dies of heartbreak (depression) and her death devastates the children; Kizito runs away from home and Tamara having no confidante and friend, ends up taking decisions that destroy her life. The narrator, through the fictional voice of Tamara further narrates her experiences in a prison called home, thus:

> Amdist riches and affluence, I was alone so empty and unfulfilled. There were about many things I lacked, things miles away from what money can buy most, especially love, tender care, motivation, freedom and encouragement. I lacked them all, and they made me cry. Even now, I can feel the trace of tears in my voice. It was with deep regret that I realized how wrong your style of father-ship was. Father, you were a total stranger to me, and I to you. Even till these last moments of my life, I can hardly write, two-page essay on the man. (*Tamara* 10)

Tamara, Kizito and their mother are all victims of domestic violence. However, it is important to note that "victims of domestic violence may be trapped in domestic violent situations" ("Domestic Violence" www.independent.co.uk/news) through isolation, power and control, fear or shame. Tamara and Kizito are victims of verbal and physical abuse. Both of them experience depression and poor ability to create healthy relationships. Tamara narrates: "My brother was towing a different line of training and upbringing as a man and I was strictly being raised as a girl, and that was why, though we stay and sleep under the roof, our paths never crossed" (*Tamara* 8). Again, the protagonist laments over the unhealthy relationship that exists between her and her brother: "How I wish I had time to know him. I never knew my brother neither did he know me. We were total strangers to each other…" (*Tamara* 30).

Analyzing the character of Tamara from the psychoanalytic perspective, it could be said that Tamara has certain unconscious desire for freedom and paternal love, which does not find apractical outlet; therefore, the desire forces its way in from the unconscious, the ego blocks it off defensively, and the result is internal conflict called neuroses. It is important to note that Tamara's neurosis is obsessional and not hysterical, because she seeks love in Oedipal

figureheads for emotional satisfaction. This emotional satisfaction according to Eagleton is "the pleasure principle" (135). This also results in Tamara having sexual desire for every man that shows kindness or love to her. Analyzing Tamara's obsessional neurosis based on Eagleton's view on psychoanalysis, I will suggest that her neurosis is connected to "unresolved conflicts whose roots is traced to Oedipal movement, that is, Oedipux complex which Freud calls the "nucleus of neuroses" (137).

Eagleton observes that "there is a relation between the kind of neurosis a patient displays and the point in the pre-Oedipal stage at which his or her physical development became arrested or 'fixated' (137). The above view captures the aim of psychoanalysis to uncover the hidden causes of the neurosis (Eagleton 138). From the foregoing, we can say that Tamara and Kizito as victims of verbal and emotional abuse experience serious psychological problem as children which leads to post-traumatic stress disorder. Kristen Springer et al observe that "childhood abuse is positively related to adult depression, aggression, hostility, anger, fear, anxiety disorders, and personality disorders" (864). Because Tamara and Kizito live in a home with domestic violence, they show psychological problems from an early age, such as depression, hatred, or aggression. According to the narrator, "Kizito never spoke a word, he hardly speaks. Except for the fact that he was my brother, I would have considered him deaf and dumb….He prefers a life of solitude as he stays in his room all day doing what God knows…" (*Tamara* 16).

Asika condemns parents' obsession with materialism. He also condemns Tamara's father who believes that true happiness has to do with the provision of needed material things for children without providing them with moral and emotional support. Tamara's father rarely spends time with his family; instead of doing that, he adopts a strict form of parenting which disintegrates his

family. Despite warnings and advice from his wife to spend more time with the family, he still remains adamant and comments:

> How? I live in the same house with them. I provide them with all the material things they need, how close do you wish me to be? The timetable you see was prepared by experts, experts in children training. I did that because I love them and want the best for them. (*Tamara* 32)

From the above quotation, it is obvious that Tamara's father neglects his parental responsibilities and delegates his duty to the so called experts. Hence, his duty as a father is relegated to the background and time- tables now become the master-guide that regulates his children's lives. The children live in complete isolation and loneliness since they are not allowed to keep friends or relate with other people. Tamara in her letter to her father depicts such senseless attitude: "On Sunday… you ordered to take us out, you did not offer, you only commanded. We never argued … like prisoners without handcuffs, we climbed into the back of the jeep" (*Tamara* 34). As a result, Kizito and Tamara constantly seek to escape from the rigid and scheduled plans mapped out by their father. Despite Tamara's eagerness to escape from her father's oppressive home, she has learnt that the society is controlled by men who exploit and subjugate the female gender.

Trafficking and Sexual Abuse of the Girl -Child

The major tensions in *Tamara* are sustained by the all-pervading themes of human trafficking and sexual violence. The United Nations (UN) defines human trafficking as "the acquisition of people by improper means such as force, fraud or deception with the aim of exploiting them" (qtd in Kaylor" 1). Neha Deshpande and Nour Nawal also explain that "human trafficking is a modern-day form of slavery that involves the illegal trade of human beings for the purpose of forced exploitation" (22). They go further to observe that "sex trafficking involves some forms of forced or coerced sexual exploitation that is not limited to prostitution, and has become a

significant and growing problem…" (22). Tamara is trafficked to be exploited sexually. She is tricked into sex slavery by Senorita, a pimp. So far, there seems to be an established violent rhythm in Tamara's life: betrayal and sexual violence. Senorita's betrayal of Tamara's trust is heinous. Significantly, Tamara's aim of escaping her father's house is to assert her freedom and remould her personality. Unsuspectingly, Senorita betrays her trust because "traffickers frequently target the following types of people: undocumented immigrants, runaway and homeless youth, victims of trauma and abuse, Refugees" (Kaylor 1). Indeed, Tamara falls into these categories as Senorita warns: "Don't forget you are an illegal immigrant; we came through an illegal boat not the legal route" (*Tamara* 115). Tamara becomes a victim of trafficking because she is vulnerable to situations around her — away from home (pregnant with Obed's baby) and with the painful loss of her dead mother, and runaway brother. Tamara suffers a lot of mental anguish in the novel — isolation at home and exposure to sex slavery in a foreign environment. In line with the above view, Joe Doezema observes that "feminists perceive sex trafficking or prostitution to be a violation of human rights" (61). Jennifer Lobasz also notes that human trafficking for sexual purposes is a "security threat to individuals and society" (319). Lobasz goes further to state that "feminists' most important contribution lies in the investigations of social construction of human trafficking, which highlight the destructive role that sexist and racist stereotypes play in constructing the category of trafficking victims"(319).

In the novel, sexism continues to play a major role in subjugating the female gender to inhuman treatment. Young girls are mostly victims of sex trafficking as seen in the experiences of Senorita and Tamara. This gives a notion that they are inferior to boys. Girls are mostly trafficked as a result of their biological and vulnerable nature. The chain of trafficking is mostly carried out by young girls, men and female adults for commercial purposes. The high profit

margins and low risk of arrest are motivating factors that encourage people in human trafficking. As a result, women and girl children are "forced into situations of labour and sexual exploitation" (Fitzgibbon 81). Senorita just like Tamara is a victim of trafficking. In the novel, Senorita confesses:

> Princess brought me. For five years, I worked for her. For five years, I prostituted on the streets of Italy until I was wise enough to demand my freedom. She did not really agree to free me, she employed me and it is now my duty to recruit young girls from Nigeria for her. My colleagues cover other parts of Africa. (*Tamara* 114)

The above instances of betrayal as a result of human trafficking are evident to an average reader. Princess betrays Senorita for self-enrichment; Senorita on her part betrays Tamara for the same reason at her expense. By this act, Senorita joins the crowd of pimps who lack the moral conscience to respect basic human rights. It could equally be said that, it is Senorita who first feels betrayed by Princess after she has elicited her promise to find a good job abroad. Tamara also feels betrayed by Senorita, so she meekly and fearfully succumbs to prostitution after several threats to her life. In addition to the sexual abuse Tamara suffers at the hands of Dunga and Obed she is deceived, trafficked and lured into prostitution by Senorita. It is important to note that Tamara accepts Senorita's offer of travelling in search of greener pastures without proper investigation. Senorita betrays Tamara, who discovers that she has been trafficked after reaching her destination. Tamara's frustration over this betrayal is evident in the quotation below:

> Why did you lie to me? You told me I was coming to Italy to work, to go to school, to become myself and find love in the end… your job is to find young girls whom you lie to be your cousins and bring them here for…for…to sleep with white men….(*Tamara* 113)

Asika's vision of girls as betrayers of others is exacerbated by glimpses of infidelity in friendship in *Tamara*. So we have the glimpses of infidelity as a counterweight to the all-pervading violent

experiences of the protagonist. Tamara flees from emotional violence at home and takes an uncertain journey with Senorita to a new country in the hope of finding job and safety. Tamara's reaction is indeed typical for children who live in homes characterized by abuse; "in their attempts to avoid further abuse …they develop idealized images that they cannot contain" (Harter 275). Tamara's father verbally abuses Tamara as a style of training to instill a high level of moral performance on her as a girl, but his style turns out to be a severe emotional threat. Tamara's escape from home signals (parental betrayal) while her situation as a trafficked girl signals friendship betrayal.

The theme of sexual violence is evident in *Tamara.* Repressive measures and brutality take up a large part of the novel. Tamara's story is not just a mere letter of forgiveness or negotiation; it is brought about through violent sexual experiences fuelled by human trafficking and prostitution. One thing is very clear in Asika's novel – violence (sexual and domestic) is perpetrated by men against girls. This is indeed termed 'gender-based abuse'. As a young girl of sixteen, Tamara is sexually molested by Dunga, their family driver (*Tamara* 77). At the same age, she is sexually abused and impregnated by Obed (*Tamara* 83). Again, at the same age, she is trafficked to Italy as a prostitute. In Italy, the reality of her situation surfaces when a white man (Bruce) confronts her, "…. I am here to fuck you....You of course, you are Tamara, the youngest of the girls from Nigeria. It is you I want. You must know I paid heavily for you, so you must give me a good treat, a worth for my money. I am going to fuck you real hard" (*Tamara* 110). Bruce in his sexual escapades is cruel as a result of his strong violent attitude and language against Tamara. Tamara narrates Bruce's violent behaviour towards her: "…he charged at me. I was trying to fathom what to do when he descended on my breasts and pushed me violently and he fell on the bed…" (*Tamara* 109). As a young girl, Tamara is forcibly subjected to have sexual relationship

with her customers after severe beatings and threats. Princess, the pimp, acts as the chief centripetal force, pushing Tamara to sexual slavery. She cautions Tamara:

> You think this hostel is a place from where you attend classes? You think these walls were built for charity or a kind of refugee camp, better still, a non-governmental building for abandoned desperate girls like you? ….Listen, as long as you live here, you work for me. These walls were not built for jamboree, it is for business. It is not for babies like you. You better grow up or consider being bundled back to only God knows where…. (Tamara 110-111)

From the foregoing, it is clear that Tamara has become a slave girl, enslaved by oppressive and antiquated patriarchal figures that clearly fit into Freud's concept of Oedipus, those wielding territorial and sexual powers. Tamara's father wields territorial power, while Obed, Dunga, Bruce and Carlos wield sexual power.

Tamara is the character from which radiates much of the interpersonal relationships in Asika's novel, while Senorita acts as one of the centripetal forces drawing Tamara to prostitution. While Senorita gives her humanity to Tamara, the forces of prostitution which hinge on sexual violence take it away. For Asika and the readers, Senorita is a trafficking agent under a pimp called Princess. Senorita is a prostitute. Senorita is a betrayer. The quotation below gives a clear view of Senorita's role as an agent – "I love you that was why I couldn't tell you. Other girls were aware of what they were coming to do except you. You were far too young to understand and I pitied you. I do love you and care a lot about you" (*Tamara* 113). Senorita's betrayal is evident when Tamara reveals her decision to escape from Princess and report her to the police. Senorita threatens Tamara:

> Princess will never consent to that. She knows the entire tricks and anything you can ever do. It's a syndicate business, a kind of networking, heavily sponsored too. She has been into this business for years. If you ever leave the walls of this compound, you will never escape alive and no police will believe you're innocent. It is better you don't even try…. You see, she has everything about you ….The security here is high; the business is well

> sponsored and organized. You see, your only choice is to accept my promise and work for your freedom. (*Tamara* 115)

Tamara indeed forms the significant structural center in the novel. In the creation of the character of Tamara, Asika shows himself as an expert in irony. There is indeed a contradiction between circumstances and expectations; that is, the condition contrary to what Tamara expects in her quest or journey for liberation as well as the reader's expectations about her. Asika uses an ironic mode to capture the derogatory phases of Tamara's experiences – as a girl whose father is wealthy and influential (no ideal family, no normal childhood), and as a character who has violent relationships with men in her quest for emotional or psychological liberation. It is obvious that Tamara abhors prostitution; this is seen in her statement to Senorita: 'if you love me I want you to take me right out of this house to a plane for Nigeria….if you don't, I will run straight to any police station and report all of you"(*Tamara* 115). But as the story reaches the climax, we see Tamara embracing prostitution as a pattern of living. She confesses:

> Father, I know that you will read all these parts with shame but your daughter later became a full time prostitute and was reputed for it. Father, I made money, I really made money quite enough to buy a house here and train quite a number of people. The last time Senorita came to see me, she could hardly recognize me. My profile surprised her. She advised me to be cautious but the advice was useless. I was already there at the centre of it all. There could hardly be a day I did not carry up to eight men. My worst day was the day I had only two and I could not sleep. Father, if you would wish to find me, ask about Tamara, the only Nigerian girl, that's my honour, my title, my regalia, my armour! (*Tamara* 118)

From the foregoing discussion on trafficking and sexual abuse, it is clear that intra-gender deceit, trafficking, self-assertion, individualism and quest for materialism are the major forces that push girls into prostitution. It is also clear that unprivileged girls like Tamara need to be protected, loved and educated on the consequences of escaping from home and human trafficking. But instead of helping stranded and emotionally depressed girls like Tamara, other females like

Senorita and Princess exploit their condition by trafficking them for their own economic benefits. Through this, intra-gender trafficking becomes unending and cyclic. This becomes a norm as "women make life hard for fellow women" (Arndt, *The Dynamics*… 119). Thus, this chain of oppression that is hinged on deceit continues and the number of trafficked girls increases. The underlying consequence is that "girls in their prime are encouraged by women who should be loving mothers (whether biological or otherwise) to sell their bodies, to hawk their vaginas in Europe for the pleasure, exploitation and satisfaction of patriarchal powers" (Owan 270). The above view is very disturbing because morality is denigrated and the future of girls is jeopardized and crumpled thus exposing them to inhuman treatment, psychological trauma, diseases, other health issues or death. In the novel, Tamara becomes critically ill as a result of "badly damaged kidney" (*Tamara* 129). She also suffers from cancer of the liver as a result of substance abuse without fulfilling her dreams. It is therefore clear that the physical and psychological consequences of girl child trafficking is enormous and cannot be overlooked.

Female Assertiveness as a Strategy for Emancipation

The quest for the female gender to be liberated physically, mentally and emotionally in a male-dominated society has always been a topic of discussion in the literary world. The strategy for achieving this emancipation is through feminist consciousness such as self-assertion and female bonding. Feminist consciousness arouses self-discovery or self-consciousness and a rejection of male chauvinism which subjugates and oppresses the female gender. Asika creates a rebellious girl character who she uses to expose the issue of domestic violence in the family which limits the female gender. In fact, her rebellion exhibits a high level of independence that leads her through liberation and finally to destruction. In essence, her escape from her father's house is a challenge to patriarchal attitudes and institution which threaten her human rights.

Tamara's assertiveness is spurred by her father's tyrannical style of parenting which pushes her to escape from their mansion in search of true love and emotional succor. Tamara wishes to "escape that lonely house, mix with real people, pick up a new identity, start a new life, be herself, make her own decisions, and her own money, work and carter for herself and find a man who will love her" (*Tamara* 102).In fact her journey for emancipation puts her into deep problems. In a bid to escape her father's tyrannical style of parenting, Tamara takes decisions that changed her life forever. In search of love, she befriends Dunga, her father's driver at the age of sixteen and loses her virginity to him. When her father sends Dunga away as a result of his relationship with Tamara, she quickly entangles herself in a new relationship with Obed, who abuses her sexually and leaves her pregnant. Frustrated, desperate and lonely again, she meets a young lady, Senorita, at a restaurant who helps her to abort the unwanted pregnancy. They become close friends and confidantes. In fact, after hearing Tamara's pathetic story, Senorita offers to take her to Italy where she can further her education and make a living. The rest of the story details the agony of an emotionally abused girl who searches for good companionship and happiness but ends up being trafficked and sexually abused. It is important to note that Tamara adopts prostitution as a strategy for achieving equal rights with men, emotional succor, love and self-fulfillment. She becomes proud and confesses that "there could hardly be a day she did not carry up to eight men….her profile surprised her. She was at the centre of it all…" (*Tamara* 118). At the end of the story, she finds true love in her relationship with Carlos; gives birth to a baby girl but pays dearly for the harm done to her body during her years of prostituting in the streets of Europe. She becomes terribly ill with cancer of the liver and feels very miserable as she awaits death to end her life.

Asika also adopts female bonding as a strategy for female liberation. For Tamara and her mother, female bonding is indispensable because they are physically and emotionally oppressed. This bonding between a daughter and her mother is necessary because it aids them to lean on one another in their difficult moments. We see female bonding in the attempts Tamara's mother makes to help her daughter cope with the overbearing attitude of an authoritative father – "don't mind your father, my daughter, when you grow up you will understand. Inside him, he is full of love, but outside he battles with an unknown force that makes him deny us love" (*Tamara* 17). It is therefore saddening that this bonding is cut short by the death of Tamara's mother. This leaves her empty and shattered. As a result, the agony of her mother's death and the sudden disappearance of her brother become a catalyst that fuel her consciousness— the conscious to liberate herself through escape.

At best, the psychological conditions of the girl protagonist in *Tamara* do not show extreme depression. In essence, as a trauma survivor, Tamara is not detached from reality; she has consciously repressed certain memories after her original experiences to anchor on mutual agreement, collaboration and complementarity in her relationship with her father. This is called "Active repression" (Schmid, 2). The above views have significance, because Tamara is given the chance to reconcile with her father and negotiate for forgiveness through her letter.

Asika adopts radical feminism and womanist ideology to resolve Tamara's conflict. The radical feminist stance is seen in Tamara's escape in search of self-fulfillment and development. The womanist stance is seen in Tamara's act of negotiation for peace between her and her father. It is necessary to note that Asika's Tamara writes a letter to her father asking for forgiveness while negotiating for reconciliation. Therefore, from the foregoing, it is clear that Asika's womanist stance is not forced. It is spurred by the protagonist's willingness to make peace.

In conclusion, the four heroines in the four selected novels experience violence in different forms. They struggle with patriarchal forces to actualize themselves differently in the domestic and cultural contexts through rebellion on their journey to self-actualization in the society; unfortunately, they are unsuccessful in their quest for emancipation. One thing is clear – the heroines' violent experiences push them into the battle of self-acualization in order to recover their self-worth and freedom from patriarchal oppression.

The next chapter which is, "chapter four" will explore the aspects of style employed by Emecheta, Vera, Farah and Asika to further explicate the general theme of violence in the selected novels.

CHAPTER FIVE

ASPECTS OF STYLE IN THE SELECTED NOVELS OF BUCHI EMECHETA, YVONNE VERA, NURUDDIN FARAH AND IKECHUKWU ASIKA

The selected African female and male authors for this research employ style in their novels to depict oppressive violent female experiences. The female protagonists created by the selected authors are in search for self-realization and freedom from patriarchal subjugation. In essence, the female protagonists engage in self-assertive quests to reject patriarchal domination in one way or the other.

Emecheta, Vera, Farah and Asika employ stylistic devices to educate the readers on the complexity of the girl-child's violent experiences. Significantly, they employ techniques and styles to present their philosophical ideas or messages to the readers. The techniques and stylistic devices adopted by these novelists are plot, motif, use of language (symbolism, imagery, setting, irony) and narrative technique. The selected novelists adopt the above devices as special tools to depict the oppressive experiences of their female protagonists and the rough path they walk towards achieving liberation, self-actualization and self-consciousness. This chapter explores the selected stylistic devices and techniques in Buchi Emecheta's *The Bride Price*, Vera's *Under the Tongue*, Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* and Asika's *Tamara*.

Techniques and styles are very important features that flavour a writer's depiction of experiences. Mark Schorer explains that "the achieved content of the work – its art – is accomplished through technique" (qtd in Nnolim, *Approaches*… 215). According to Schorer in *Modern British Fiction: Essays in Criticism*, technique is "a writer's means to discovering, exploring, developing and evaluating his subject… of conveying his meaning, and evaluating it" (66).

Nnolim goes further to explain that "technique is the means by which an author organizes his material, the rhythm or form he imposes on his work in order to achieve meaning and in order to convey that meaning to his audience" (*Approaches*… 215). The above explanation on technique also forms the author's style. According to M.H. Abrams,

> Style is the manner of linguistic expression in prose or verse — it is how a speaker or writer says whatever he says. The characteristic style of a work or a writer may be analyzed in terms of its diction, or characteristic choice of words; its sentence structure and syntax; the density and types of it figurative language; the patterns of its rhythm and of its component sounds; and its rhetoric aims and devices. (165-166)

T. Kennedy-Oti in "Style and African Novel" observes that "style involves the ability to convey an exact picture or emotion that one feels to another person in speaking or writing" (145). Geoffery Leech and Michael Short define style as "the way language is used in a given context, by a given person, for a given purpose" (*Style in Fiction*… 10). Leech and Short further observe that style has been applied to "the linguistic habits of a particular writer, at other times it has been applied to the way language is used in a particular genre, period, school of writing, or some combination of these – epistolary, early eighteenth-century style, euphuistic style, the style of Victorian novels…" (*Style in Fiction*… 11).

Plot

In Abrams' view, "the plot in a dramatic or narrative work is the structure of its actions, as these are ordered and rendered toward achieving particular emotional and artistic effects" (*A Glossary of Literary Terms 127*). According to Afamefuna Ezeaku, "plot refers to the mechanics of story-telling, including the sequence of the characters' comings and goings; and the specific order of revelations, reversals, quarrels, discoveries, and actions that take place…" (*Fundamentals*… 20). Ezeaku further observes that "the plot is the sequence in which the author arranges, narrates or dramatizes the story" (*Fundamentals*… 20). Thus plot comprises a series of incidents which are

gradually unfolded or revealed in an unexpected manner to "achieve tragic effects, and other effects such as comedy, romance, or satire" (*A Glossary of Literary Terms* 128).

Emecheta's *The Bride Price* has a linear plot structure. The story of Aku-nna is presented in a chronological order. This allows the author to trace her physical, emotional and psychological development. In fact, the arrangement of events into chronological order allows Emecheta to paint a vivid picture of Aku-nna's processes of growth in different socio-political spaces or environments. Significantly, Emecheta's heroine is vividly situated in both traditional and contemporary settings where individual assertion is necessary. This self-assertion or rebellious tendency enables her to liberate herself from patriarchal oppression. By so doing, she is drawn to revolutionary actions in order to settle the differences between her ideals and reality. Aku-nna develops a rebellious attitude in order to revolt against Ibuza traditionally-instituted forced marriage. This attitude is seen in her act of eloping with her Osu friend, Chike Ofulue. Aku-nna's action contravenes her Ibuza cultural tradition which stipulates that "an Osu or Oru may not marry a free-born" (Boostrom 61). The above view by Boostrom portrays a "social stigma found in a mid-twentieth century Igbo society" (Boostrom 61). Indeed, Emecheta buttresses the fact that the girl child should not be intimidated by patriarchal subjugation but must employ strategies that would lead to emancipation, self-actualization and fulfilment. The above assertion supports Kolawole's view of "females in social change" ("A Womanist Legacy…" 106).

Structurally, *The Bride Price* is written in chapters. The chapters are ten in number and chronologically arranged to trace the physical and psychological journeys of the heroine. The chapters are arranged based on the order of events such as "The Bride Price", "Death", "The Burial", "Return to Ibuza", "Life in Ibuza", "Tradition", "The Slaves", "A Kind of marriage", "Escape and Tempting providence". The above designated chapters clearly delineate the

heroine's experiences and journeys. This enables the reader to see how Aku-nna is marginalized, oppressed and subjugated. The sections also reveal the efforts the heroine makes to break free from Ibuza frustrating culture towards self-liberation. The above depictions by Emecheta make the story plausible. Therefore, it is right to say that Emecheta's plot in *The Bride Price* creates an aura of verisimilitude because it produces conflict, creates tension to the extent that Aku-nna's actions arouse and hold the interest of the readers. In fact, the details of patriarchal obstacles or limitations and the challenges that confront Aku-nna as a girl child, build the plot. Furthermore, the ordering of the incidents within Aku-nna's story is seen as Emecheta's plot. This is to say that, traditionally, the structure of *The Bride Price* consists of four basic parts namely: exposition, conflict, climax, denouement or resolution.

The beginning of Aku-nna's story exposes the reader to the initial conflict and rising action. The death of Aku-nna's father is a precursor to her oppression and subsequent subjugation to different forms of violence. The climax of the story is captured in her elopement with her Osu lover, Chike, without an official bride price being paid. The tragic death of Aku-nna during childbirth signals the resolution of the story. This is indeed the climactic moment that resolves all the conflicts, putting an end to any further depiction of experiences. All this leads to exposing the cause and effects relations. Ezeaku observes that "cause and effect is an organizational technique that presents events and conditions as reason and result, motive and reaction, or stimulus and response" (*Fundamentals*… 21). In essence, events charting Aku-nna's life are tied up through elements like causality, conflict (internal and external), complication, climax and finally resolution.

The plot of Vera's *Under the Tongue* is loose and traumatically induced. This is to say that the novel explores more of emotional pain than action. In essence, there is no unity of action; the

parts of the novel are loosely connected. Zhizha's story is narrated in fragments and alternating chapters. Hence, J. Hemmings maintains that "each fragment contains a message, a story, but resists a tidy or forced conclusion" (237). *Under the Tongue* is written in chapters. The chapters are twenty-three in number and ambiguously written. Most of the experiences in the novel are narrated by heavy-tongued Zhizha in a cyclic form. Her thoughts and words spin in a circular form as she utters a timeless narrative in present tense: "A knife moves sharply on rock. I hear a cry like falling water, then silence…. I turn in my sleep. I listen. There is silence. A sound comes towards me" (*Under the Tongue,* 141). Zhizha is haunted day and night by her memories. She has nightmares as a result of her weakened psyche which is disoriented.

Kopf notes that Zhizha's thoughts are narrated in a circular form. He goes further to explain that:

> Zhizha's mental language creates a repeated flow of thoughts in the circular structure of her mental narrative …. We leave her right in her remembrance of the incest, which she narrates — with one brief exception — in present, not in past time, just as if it is still happening, as if there is no end and no temporal progression from it. (250)

Indeed, Zhizha has been silenced by her traumatic experience, but slowly in a dreamlike form, she narrates her story. All the actions of the story are limited by the protagonist's inability to narrate her experiences. This makes the novel very challenging to read. Chapters – two, six, eight, ten, twelve, eighteen, twenty, twenty-two and twenty-four which are narrated in the third person narrative viewpoint depict the story of Zhizha's parents, Runyararo (mother) and Wuroyiwa (father), and their tragic end; while the other remaining chapters are narrated from Zhizha's perspective using the first person narrative viewpoint..

Generally, Vera's loose plot structure does not allow the growth and development of her protagonist as a result of her depiction of her extreme mental disorder (psychosis). Zhizha's

severe mental disorder is marked by a deranged personality and a distorted view of reality. Therefore, Vera allows a limited knowledge of her growth in the plot to depict her mental condition. Specifically, Vera's plot becomes cyclical and the narration is evidently repetitive as the protagonist tries to reconstruct her traumatic experience using a narrative memory. In essence, distortion of thoughts and fragmentation of experience characterize Vera's narration. The character (Zhizha) remains in that condition till the end of the novel. Significantly, the plot of Vera's *Under the Tongue* is traumatic and tragic.

Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* is presented in a chronological order. In essence, the story adopts a linear plot structure which employs a narrative memory to depict the experiences of Ebla. Structurally, *From a Crooked Rib* is divided into four parts (4) namely: Part One, Part Two, Part Three and Part Four. Part One comprises chapters 1-3, Part Two contains chapters 4-15, Part Three has chapters 16-20 and Part Four contains chapters 20-30. The structure of the novel consists of four basic parts: exposition, complication of conflict or rising action, climax, denouement or resolution. Farah uses prologue to expose the events that would lead to conflicts in the main plot. The prologue performs the basic function of exposition by introducing a character, an old man whose actions would create conflicts in the story. The omniscient narrator introduces the temperament of a character (Ebla's grandfather) who is unhappy about a given situation that deviates from the normal family and traditional modes of living. The angry mood of the old man (Ebla's grandfather) indicates a serious conflict which forces him to rain curses on his subject of discussion (Ebla). The narrator comments: "He could curse. That was all he could do. Other than that, he could give advice, but now he cursed" (*From a Crooked Rib* 3).

The plot of Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* is designed to achieve the effect of satire. Satire in a literary work is designed to achieve the effect of ridiculing and evoking contempt, indignation, or

scorn. Farah adopts satire as a variety of plot patterns in order to ridicule and expose varying religious, traditional and cultural elements that subjugate the girl-child. He develops the plot of *From a Crooked Rib* to clearly show the gradual movement of Ebla's struggles from rebellion to self-assertion and finally to negotiation. Farah's plot relies heavily on suspense to heighten the protagonist's purpose for emancipation which keeps the reader's sense alive till the resolution of the story or conflict. The plot of the novel develops into conflicts as Ebla escapes from her family's rural setting to a city (Belet Wene). The plot further takes a feminist dimension as Ebla becomes more determined and assertive in her struggle for liberation against patriarchy. In fact, the plot offers surprises to the readers when Ebla represses her assertive quest for emancipation and reconciles with her oppressor, Awill. This creates an emotional pull that keeps the readers pathetic towards the condition of the girl child. In essence, the resolution of Ebla's conflict through reconciliation with the Oedipal figurehead that sexually abused her, is one way Farah tries to expose the fact that human rights violation constitutes a huge problem in Somalia.

Plot is the main fictional element of narration used in analyzing Asika's novel, *Tamara*, the plot of *Tamara* is structured using an epistolary form. The epistolary technique is a literary form that adopts letters, newspapers or written diary to depict or narrate the experiences of characters in a given story. The epistolary genre is a direct source of oral narration – "mediated, written form of discourse between individuals who are unable to engage in direct oral dialogue" (Vinogradov & Skvortsov, 4). Fesenko (2008) categorizes the epistolary genre into different forms based on its context: "everyday epistolary (private correspondence between persons), journalistic epistolary (a letter that can be addressed to one person or an entire community, but is published in this or that form in mass media or other channels of mass communication), and fiction epistolary – the

conveyance of the thoughts of an author of a fictional work using all the rules of the epistolary genre" (5834).

The epistolary genre is adopted as a literary form or technique in a given fictional work to clearly depict the writer's intention and thematic concentration. According to A. V. kurjanovich, the depictions of events and manner of expression using the epistolary genre are blended to suit the author's purpose, the plot of the work, and the characters (183). In literature, the usefulness of the epistolary form is strongly linked to the stylistic features and structure of a given fictional work. This stylistic feature is hinged on the artistic intent of the literary artist and his creative interpretation of the work. Toktagazin and Adilbekovab summarize the above- mentioned views by echoing that,

> The epistolary genre exists only because its genre-defining features are consistently observed in this or that interpretation, regardless of their use in a respective functional style of a language – a business letter will have its special constructions, but the structure of the letter – the address, the greeting, the main part, and the conclusion – will be preserved; the same applies to a scientific letter, private letter or a letter of a fictional character to another/other character/characters. (5835-5836)

In *Tamara*, the girl protagonist scribbles her letter under a dramatic and unlikely circumstance – on her sickbed, dying of cancer. Just like Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, Asika's *Tamara* tells the story of an emotionally and physically abused teenage girl (Tamara) who tells her story through writing a letter to her father. Asika uses the epistolary form as a variety of framing devices since the story is presented through Tamara's letter in an attempt to reconcile with her father and intimate him about her condition. Toktagazin and Adilbekovab observe that "the letter, implying the use of the epistolary genre in literature, with a high degree of probability will be stylized as a personal, business, scientific or any other correspondence, but it will use many techniques of artistic expression"(5836).

In analyzing any epistolary sub-genre, certain features of epistolary genre are evident: "dialogical structure of correspondence, the content of the letter, the narration in the letter, framing the principle of keeping intimate and dialogical nature of the letters" (Toktagazin and Adilbekovab 5836). One important characteristic about the epistolary form in literature is that it makes readers to go through the events and actions in the imaginative reality. This reality is achieved because, "epistolary genre has a dialogue nature" (Denkova 10).

Asika's adoption of the epistolary form adds realism to his narrative and gives readers an intimate view of his character's thoughts and feelings. The dialogical structure of correspondence as an important feature of the epistolary genre is prominent in *Tamara*. In the novel, the author of the letter is a young protagonist called Tamara. Tamara uses the structure of the letter to communicate to her addressee (her father). The letter of the girl protagonist is perceived as a postponed dialogue which is communicated after some physical and emotional challenges. In essence, Tamara's letter guides the readers into her experiences and psychological disposition.

The first thing a reader of *Tamara* discovers from the first and last pages of the novel is the use of the epistolary form in detailing the experiences of the protagonist – her regrets, the sorrow and pain of a loveless childhood under the authoritative watch of her father. The example below depicts the dialogical structure of the correspondence as seen in the beginning of the letter and actions of the story.

> Dear Father,
>
> > Before you receive this letter, I know you must have made up your mind and have carved out a life, a way of survival without me. You must have considered me dead, dead, buried and forgotten on the sand of time. Who knows if you have erected a grave-like monument as a remembrance of

> the daughter you once had and was taken away from you by the cold hands of unknown death? I wonder how you remember me? (*Tamara* 7)

In the letter-writing narrative form, Asika alternates between the character's inner thoughts and the depiction of her violent experiences. Toktagazin and Adilbekovab maintain that "the purpose of a letter in an epistolary subgenre of art is to show the personal experiences of the hero-author of the letter of certain plot events of the novel. Sometimes the author can totally change the story of his work or turn the unexpected side of work to the reader using a letter" (5836).

The novel, *Tamara* starts with the opening paragraph of the letter and ends with the concluding paragraph. Hence, the writer creatively employs flashback and foreshadowing to recall how her childhood experiences influenced her decisions and actions as an adult. This recollection is narrated in the middle of the letter. Thus, the reader gets to understand her pains and experiences within the body of her long agonizing and reconciliatory letter. The example below depicts the dialogical structure of the correspondence as seen in the end of the letter as well as the resolution of the conflict between the writer and the receiver.

> What a long letter, father! What a day! As I celebrate my life and the life of Tamara Carlos just three days old and the life unknown. I have a feeling that we shall meet again, if not here, surely there! Till then, my father, my daddy…
>
> Adieu,
> If We Ever Meet Again,
> Your daughter,
> Tamara… (*Tamara* 148)

Framing is also important while exploring the epistolary form of writing. The term, 'framing' suggests that a given work irrespective of its subgenre must employ the characteristic features of a letter. It must have the address, the salutation, the beginning, body of the letter and conclusion (Toktagazin and Adilbekovab 5836). Indeed, Asika's *Tamara* has all the above-mentioned features.Therefore it is important to note that the only idea a reader can obtain of a novel's plot is the "one he gains from the words in which the book is written" (Mayhead, 62). Mayhead further

explains that “a reader’s response to a personage is a response to certain words used by the author, words in which he describes the personage, words spoken by the personage himself , words spoken about him by other characters in the book, and so on” (64). The above view on ‘plot’ is also true of ‘character’. Tamara’s plot is very convincing and the characters are well drawn from the society. The story of Tamara is narrated using a ‘linear plot structure. The story has a beginning, middle and end. The beginning captures the childhood experiences of the protagonist and the reasons for her decisions to escape patriarchal oppression.

Significantly, the selected novels of Emecheta, Farah and Asika depict elaborate plot narrations with different incidents. These incidents thus depict organized actions, thoughts, and interaction of characters into the artful patterns of a plot, which has a beginning and develops through the middle to some sort of denouement at the end of the novels. However, Vera’s novel has no definite organized actions and thoughts because the major character is stuck in her mentally deranged state. Thus, there is no evident progression of the story from the beginning to the end.

In conclusion, the plot patterns of the selected novels effectively communicate to expose the violent experiences of the girl-child in different African contexts. The plot of Emecheta’s *The Bride Price* which is linear evolves through a process of multiple points of view and different interpretations to clearly explore Aku-nna’s growth from the space of oppression to self-assertion, to show that, violent condition could push the girl-child to rebellion in order to attain wholeness. Events in Emecheta’s novel employ series of flashbacks to connect incidents.The reminiscences indeed enhance the motifs in *The Bride Price,* recalling past events, and linking those past events to the present. Emecheta clearly depicts Aku-nna’s process of growth through

the journey and slavery motifs which trace her oppression to reveal her new consciousness for self-emancipation.

The plot pattern of Vera's *Under the Tongue* effectively communicates Zhizha's neurotic state. In the usual sense, there is no series of events that can conveniently be categorized as the beginning, middle and end. In fact the circular spiraling nature of Vera's narrative and the excessive use of fragments in narrating Zhizha's experience depict a traumatically induced plot.

The plot of Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* is appropriate for exposing violence on the girl-child because it clearly exposes the abuse of female bodies through forced marriage, bartering and sexual exploitation. In essence, Farah's plot through the journey and slavery motifs exposes various views on female oppression and how Ebla surmounts her oppression. Farah's plot is symbolically cyclic in nature because we see Ebla returning to the oppressive condition she once rejected. Significantly, Farah's portrayal appeals to the readers' emotions and draws their concern to the helpless condition of the girl-child in Somalia.

The plot of Asika's *Tamara* employs the first person narrative and letter technique to narrate Tamara's experiences. The letter is employed as a principle source of information that details Tamara's perception about life. This epistolary style allows Farah to narrate Tamara's story in a chronological order vividly presenting the story as a whole. The epistolary form also enhances the journey motif because Tamara's growth is traced from oppression to self-assertion. In essence, the events and actions reveal a clear personality change from Tamara as an emotionally abused victim to Tamara as a girl who is determined to explore her newly found freedom.

From the foregoing discussions, it is clear that the plot patterns of all the selected novels explore the oppressive conditions of the girl-child using different points of view and reiterations which

allow the readers to trace the protagonists' growth from the state of voicelessness to that of vocality.

Use of Language

Diction is "the choice of words or language used by a writer. It is the manner or style of speaking or expressing one's ideas. It tells us about the individual characters, the setting of the story and the relationship between characters as well as an avenue to identify theme. Diction is not just the language, but how the language is used" (Ezeaku *Fundamentals of Literature* 32). Therefore, a novelist's medium of language, whatever he or she does using language is his or her means of artistic creation. Emecheta, Vera, Farah and Asika employ language to depict their girl characters' experiences as well as their struggles to assert themselves in their patriarchal societies.

The Bride Price adopts a simple narrative in depicting the experiences of Aku-nna. The language of the novel is lucid and the thematic issues are unambiguously expressed to depict Emecheta's disgust about social injustice. Emecheta's Igbo pedigree is evident in her use of words. The novel is replete with some Igbo lexical items that characterize her Ibuza cultural community. In essence, *The Bride Price* meets the linguistic prerequisite for the representation of everyday speech or dialect of the Ibuza society.

The multiple facets of Igbo terms in the narrative augment Emecheta's depiction of social reality in the foregrounding of the Igbo worldview. This is also relevant in her projection of her radical feminist stance against patriarchy and female oppression. It is vital to note that Igbo words which represent the culture of the Ibuza Igbo community suggest the oppression of the female gender. Emecheta's depiction of these linguistic expressions points to one fact – her hatred for cultural

subjugation and female oppression. The foregoing view aligns with Cate Poynton's explanation that "aspects of social reality that come to be perceived as oppressive by those who are oppressed may come to be named by them" (12).

The Igbo lexicon and an aspect of social reality Emecheta depicts in her radical feminist rejection of Ibuza system of marriage is 'isi nmo' – a conspicuous feature of the Ibuza patriarchal system. According to the narrator: "all the man responsible had to do was to cut a curl of her hair – 'isi nmo' – and she would belong to him for life" (*The Bride Price* 132). This 'isi nmo' is depicted as an oppressive norm that subjugates girls to servitude by abduction or forced early marriage. Emecheta clearly depicts and rejects the undesirable norm, 'isi nmo'. She observes that:

> In Ibuza a young girl must be prepared for anything to happen. Some youth who had no money to pay for bride price might sneak out of the bush to cut a curl from a girl's head so that she would belong to him for life and never be able to return to her parents: because he had given her the everlasting haircut, he would be able to treat her as he liked, and no other man would ever touch her. (*The Bride Price* 103).

The above-mentioned norm is vehemently resisted by Ibuza girls in the novel – "it was to safeguard themselves against this that many girls cropped their hair very close; those who wanted long hair wore a headscarf most of the time. But when they were twelve strong, a man or boy who dared to attempt such a thing knew that he would be mobbed that if he lived to go home to his mother she would not even recognize him" (*The Bride Price*, 103-4). The above feminist action is a protest or revolt against patriarchy and its oppressive limitations.

The protest against patriarchy is also reflected in the interpretation given to Igbo names in the novel. According to V. C. Onumajuru, "name is as important to the Igbo as the birth of a child because the Ibuza parents express all their expectations in life in the name they give to their children. From the names children bear, one can guess the intentions/life-experiences and or

expectations of the parents" (308). Onumajuru further observes that "each Igbo name can be structurally analyzed; whether they are male or female names. In essence, all Igbo names are lexicalized sentences that are written as one word" (310). The name, 'Nna-nndo' is a male lexical name which means – 'father is the shelter' (*The Bride Price* 28). The feminist interpretation of the name is given by Emecheta through her protagonist, Akunna:

> But, Nna-nndo, you have got it all wrong, Aku-nna said to herself. It is that we have no father any more, we have no parents any more. Did not our father rightly call you Nna-nndo, meaning 'father is the shelter'? So not only have we lost a father, we have lost our life, our shelter! It is so even today in Nigeria: when you have lost your father, you have lost your parents. Your mother is only a woman, and women are supposed to be boneless. A fatherless family is a family without a head, a family without a shelter, a family without parents, in fact a non-existing family. (*The Bride Price* 28)

The above views summarize Emecheta's perception about the position of girls and women in Igbo cultural setting. We see this in the unhappy life of Aku-nna, who is denigrated for being a girl and forced into early marriage at fifteen. Obviously, Aku-nna's unhappy experiences start with the death of her father who is the shelter (breadwinner) of the family. Hilary I. Okagbue et al maintain that:

> Igbo personal names are gender sensitive because of the patriarchal nature of Igbo people. The males are often named based on issues such as: gods or deities, physical and spiritual objects, intellectual prowess and dexterity in trade or agriculture, natural or mysterious phenomena, sportsmanship and craftsmanship, animals and so on. On the other hand, female names are often associated with good lineage, fruitfulness, beauty and intelligent, moral responsibility, favor, good luck and tidings, joy, happiness, wealth, purity and so on. (74)

In *The Bride Price*, Aku-nna is a female name which literally means 'father's wealth'. Aku-nna as the girl character is only perceived by her father (Ezekiel Odia) and step-father (Okonkwo) as a treasure to be valued through bride price (*The Bride Price* 10). Okagbue et al suggest that "naming in Igbo is a premeditated venture that is designed to speak to the future of the newly born child" (73). The Ibuza people believe that names are tied to destinies or wishes and as such

adopt philosophical, religious, social or psychological concepts to interpret the names of individuals. In Aku-nna's case, her name is tied to her father's psychological belief of attracting wealth through bride price. The above names create "gender identity differences in Igbo community as social processes of self-esteem, class structure, status consciousness and self-categorization become institutionalized" **(**Madubuike 44). Of course, Emecheta's use of Igbo names in depicting male dominance reinforces her quest for female emancipation. It is therefore common knowledge in the novel that the tragedy of Aku-nna is hinged on the issue of bride price leading to breakups – family and clan breakups. Aku-nna's bride price is rejected by her family and Ibuza community for eloping with a slave (Chike Ofulue). Therefore, psychological pressure associated with the rejection leads to the death of Aku-nna.

Again, linguistic expressions are used in foregrounding actions in *The Bride Price*. This is perceived in the way a sentence structure in the novel mirrors different visible structures of communication by individuals in a given cultural milieu. This form of communication is achieved through "socialization where people learn and share values together" (Wood 13). The feminist emancipation ideology is expressed in the novel in ways that depict gender roles in the traditional Ibuza community. For example, Emecheta, depicts girls and women's domestic and social lives as very oppressive, uneventful and wearisome. According to the author, "there is no worse fate for a woman in this town than of one who arrives at her husband's couch polluted" (*The Bride Price* 107). The above statement plays out in Aku-nna's life after telling lies about her sexual relationship with Chike in Okoboshi's family house. She is humiliated – "…remembering the picture of her standing at the stream like a young widow in an old lappa" (*The Bride Price* 154).

Linguistic expressions also help in foregrounding gender roles and discrimination. These linguistic expressions depict the socially acceptable behaviour of girls and women in Ibuza community. According to the narrator:

> Aku-nna sat on it, crossed-legged, as well brought up girls were supposed to sit. You are taught from childhood that when you sit you must make the cloth of your lappa, called iro in Yoruba, into a kite-like shape so that a point of it goes between your legs, to cover your sex. (*The Bride Price* 19)

Indeed, Emecheta's use of language embodies female oppression in customs and acts like 'isi nmo', menstruation taboo, rape and early forced marriage. Her choice of words, dialect and regional syntax also add beauty to the African setting depicted in the novel; hence, giving a clear picture of girls' experiences while depicting the Ibuza cultural nuance, myth and superstition. This thus awakens the readers to the vileness of humanity as well as the complexity of human experiences.

The consciousness of oral tradition and the implicated issue of its relevance in the novel are very evident in Emecheta's character delineation. The character of Auntie Uzo, a relative of Aku-nna fits into the image of a traditional storyteller. The resolve of Emecheta to tell a story through a female character recalls the tradition of storytelling in an Igbo environment. According to the narrator,

> Aku-nna liked listening to Auntie Uzo's stories, for she was a born storyteller. Aku-nna, like most of her friends, had been born in Lagos, but her parents and relatives were fond of telling nostalgic stories about their town Ibuza. Most of the stories were, like fairytales but with the difference that nearly all used the typical African call-and-response songs: the storyteller would call, and all the listeners would respond. Auntie Uzo was particularly gifted in the art of these songs. Sometimes her voice would rise, clean and clear, ringing like the sound of a thousand tiny bells. And when the story was a sad one, her call would be low, still clear but sounding like an angry stream rushing down a fall. (*The Bride Price* 23).

In the above quotation, Emecheta explores the oral tradition in Ibuza community. This is to show that she has consciously absorbed stories, and woven them into the fabric of her novel to reflect cultural and historical experiences. In essence, Emecheta displays creativity that involves human interactions and sensitivity to oral traditions. In effect, the poetics of orality which Emecheta conceives through 'African call -and- response songs' is that which educates, sensitizes and inculcates moral values.

Emecheta also captures an interesting use of proverb to verbalize the need for human relationship. In the novel, Uchenna, Aku-nna's uncle is the only relative that takes care of Aku-nna and Nna-ndoo after the demise of their father. Despite the discord between Uchenna and Ezekiel Odia, Uchenna still maintains a cordial relationship with his children. Emecheta therefore stresses the fact that family ties and relationships are stronger than ordinary friendship. She appreciates and admonishes using Igbo proverb as an aesthetic appeal for unity and human relationship:

> The people of Ibuza have a proverb which says that quarrels between relatives are only skin deep, they never penetrate to the bones. They have another saying, that on the day of blood relatives, friends go. This day then was the day of blood relatives. Aku-nna was learning. (*The Bride Price* 18)

Significantly, from the foregoing discussions, we must clearly emphasize that Buchi Emecheta's language skills lie in her ability to transport the readers to another world (a familiar West African world), through her pointed dialogue and exciting narration. Like Chinua Achebe, she has the gift of advancing a story through intentional dialogue while detailing cultural traditions and myths. It is not surprising, therefore, that her language skills as seen in her use of proverb, imagery, and linguistic expressions function together as a means of illuminating the changing role of the female gender in African society.

In Vera's *Under the Tongue,* diction plays a major role in depicting traumatic sexual experience. Indeed, the novel is characterized by massive use of imagery, metaphors and other figures of thought (tropes) which could be perceived as ornaments of the literal language used by Vera in depicting the traumatic experiences of her character. Vera also uses 'figures of speech' or 'rhetorical figures' which deviate from the standard of meaning and the rhetorical effect of words. Imagery is very common in *Under the Tongue*. Vera employs images made out of words to depict the condition of her girl character. Imagery (that is, 'images' taken collectively) is used to signify all the "objects and qualities of sense perception referred to in the novel, whether by allusion, or in the analogues used in its similes and metaphors" (Abrams 76).

In *Under the Tongue,* Zhizha is unable to narrate her experiences and thus laments her pains using the imagery of the 'tongue' which clearly depicts her neurotic mode of existence:

> A tongue which no longer lives, no longer weeps. It is buried beneath rock. My tongue is a river. I touch my tongue in search of places of my growing. My tongue is heavy with sleep. I know a stone is buried in my mouth, carried under my tongue. My voice has forgotten me. Only Grandmother's voice remembers me. Her voice says that before I learned to forget there was a river in my mouth. She cries about the many tongues which lie in the mouth, withered, without strength to speak the memory of their forgetting. Such tongues do not bleed. They have abandoned the things of life. (*Under the Tongue* 121)

The ambiguous use of the word 'tongue' to depict Zhizha's inability to utter the dehumanizing secrets of her rape creates mental pictures in the minds of the readers. In the above quotation, the imagery in this broad sense includes the literal objects the sentences refer to (tongue, stone, voice), as well as the 'river' which serves as the metaphor of the sentences. Also in the above sentences, Vera's reference is to the tongue (the quality of taste) as an important flexible muscular organ in the mouth that is used for tasting, which can also be moved in various positions to modify the flow of air from the lungs in order to produce different sounds. In Zhizha's situation, the tongue becomes dead and withered as a result of anxiety. In the

expression, “a tongue which no longer lives, no longer weeps. It is buried beneath rock” (*Under the Tongue* 121), the tongue is personified as it takes the human quality of a being which has experienced physical death. Hyperbole is also evident in the expression, “…there was a river in my mouth” (*Under the Tongue* 121). Here, the speaker (Zhizha) uses exaggerated language for emphasis. The speaker is overwhelmed by her traumatic experiences that many hidden and unarticulated secrets are buried in her heart. Zhizha’s traumatic reaction to sexual abuse results in a “severe outcome – neurosis” (Caruth, *Trauma*… vii).

Vera’s unique literary voice and the use of metaphoric expressions also help in buttressing her thematic factors. This is linguistically achieved through discordant use of words, flashbacks and interrupting thoughts of the sexually abused protagonist. Dodhy and Hardev observe that “by articulating a private experience of a victimized young girl, the writer reclaims the essential power of women’s speech and silences in the context of gendered nationalist ideology where sacrifices of women have been reduced to an invisible state by historiographers”(73). *Under the Tongue* is difficult to understand because Vera uses language to make unspeakable experiences and emotions real. Since the novel opens in retrospect, the narrator uses traumatic flashback to present her experiences. It is important to note that the protagonist’s narration is not reliable because of her neurotic phase of life. The use of flashback depicts Zhizha’s psychological state of mind. These flashbacks are necessary in improving the mental state of the protagonist as she tries to construct images of her own. As a trauma survivor, Zhizha finds it difficult to integrate new experiences. She is continuously dragged into her thoughts unconsciously and becomes detached from the reality of her problem.

Farah in *From a Crooked Rib* creates a female character who has the courage to assert herself individually in a patriarchal society. This self-assertion is achieved through her use of language. Farah allows her girl protagonist to use assertive language to revolt against patriarchy, gender inequality, slavery and forced marriage. In *From a Crooked Rib*, Ebla is spurred to use language to assert herself, although Somalia patriarchal tradition and Islamic religion have denigrated her as a girl. Ebla is not afraid to express her feelings on forced marriage. Her assertive feminist language is captured in the quotation: "I don't like this sort of marriage… I don't want to be sold like cattle…we are human beings…" (*From a Crooked Rib* 79-80). This self-assertion increases her feminist consciousness to the extent that she achieves self-actualization by contravening the Islamic marital law that denies a girl the right to marry two husbands. She marries Tiffo as her second husband without divorcing Awill, her first husband. This assertive language is also captured in Ebla's efforts to seek for equality in her new marriage. Her assertive statement cautions Tiffo against any form of oppression or exploitation, "we are even: you are a man and I am a woman, so we are equal. You need me and I need you. We are equal" (*From a Crooked Rib* 145). Ebla's assertiveness leads to self-actualization because she accomplishes her desire not to be controlled in her second marriage.

Symbolism is a major aspect of language. In exploring any fictional work, writers adopt symbolism to capture the attention of the readers and also to explore different levels of meanings. Symbolism is a representation of an idea or concept through underlying meanings using objects or qualities which are used as symbols. J. A Cuddon defines symbolism as "an object, animate or inanimate, which represents or stands for something" (939). Farah and Vera use symbols to evoke different mental images and emotional responses or states of mind from

the readers. These symbolic images are very important because they communicate the writers' messages.

Vera names her novel *Under the Tongue* as a result of her heroine's inability to utter her incestuous rape which got her silenced. Thus, the title of the novel becomes a symbol of unarticulated oppressive experiences of the female gender in Zimbabwe. The silence as depicted in the novel also denotes the inability of girls and women to transcend their oppression. Therefore, it is important to note that the silence exhibited by Zhizha symbolically indicates that rape is a taboo topic that is rarely discussed in Zimbabwe.

Through poetic symbolic and lyrical language, Vera depicts trauma by blending Zhizha's traumatic distorted thoughts with symbolic images drawn from nature to create a narration. Vera explores trauma by employing symbolic images that would help the readers to create gustatory, tactile, and visual qualities. These images are depicted to show the seriousness of the protagonist's condition. The use of personification is symbolic because it helps the readers to understand the depth of Zhizha's pain. Zhizha laments, "my cry is silence. My cry searches the river, wavers between bending reeds, finds father waiting and near" (*Under the Tongue* 126).

In the above quotation, the expression, 'cry is silence' which is metaphorically captured is very symbolic since it depicts the overwhelming unarticulated burden that girls and women bear as a result of the complexity of their oppressive experiences. The above quotation is replete with symbolic meanings because Zhizha's psychic wholeness has been destroyed by her father's incestuous rape. According to Zhizha, "he pulls the roots in my growing, the dream in my belonging. I cry in a voiceless tremble, my eyes parched with darkness" (*Under the Tongue* 126).

Zhizha's intrusive hallucinations are lyrical and poetically depicted with symbolic images that capture the reader's imagination. Significantly, the quotation "… the root in my growing, the dream in my belonging" in the above quotation is alluding to childhood innocence and future dreams which are violently destroyed by Zhizha's father's wicked act of rape. Again, the confessed silence or voicelessness in the quotation "I cry in a voiceless tremble, my eyes parched with darkness" (*Under the Tongue* 126) symbolically shows that severe traumatic experience does not allow narrative representation of thoughts. It simply creates different narration using adopted symbolic images. The above quotation reflects Zhizha's inability to communicate her personal violent experience in a coherent reliable manner. This fragmented speech pattern is repeated by the protagonist till the end of the novel. She struggles to narrate her traumatic experience by repeating words (repetition), omitting words (ellipsis) and merging thoughts which are fragmented.

In the novel, Zhizha is aware of the dissociation which obstructs her reconstruction of past experiences through narrative memory. She confesses: "I wait beneath a fervent sky. The shadow of the moon is wounded by the darkness. I search for the moon which has left the sky. Memory has left the sky. It is night" (*Under the Tongue* 124). Indeed, all good memories about Zhizha's childhood have disappeared from her thoughts that she is now surrounded with the darkness of the night (traumatic experience). In the above quotation, Vera personified the 'moon' to show that it is very symbolic. The 'moon' is a feminine symbol which represents the rhythm of time because it embodies the cycle. The phases of the moon symbolize – the stages of Zhizha's condition and her development as a sexually abused girl. Her childhood has been so repressed by her traumatic experiences that she becomes detached from reality. In essence, since 'the moon' controls the seasons, its apparent disappearance from the sky inhibits the growth and

development of the girl protagonist. Zhizha's life and future are indeed swallowed by the darkness; this obviously makes her cry. The 'moon' can also symbolically represent the 'soul' of Zhizha which has been crushed by the terrible sexual experience that situates her between the conscious and the unconscious.

Zhizha's silence is a symbolic one; it is the silencing of African female voices through oppression. African tradition or culture inhibits the voice of the female gender. In essence, girls and women are perceived to be silent members of the house and society. This is based on the patriarchal ideology instituted in African society. However, by depicting Zhizha's experiences, Vera has questioned this long tradition of silencing. She urges every female to voice her unspoken secrets and reclaim her suppressed freedom of speech with courage.

The title of Farah's novel, *From a Crooked Rib*, is very symbolic because it speaks to its content in many ways. Farah's title cues the readers into the central idea of the novel as he tries to suggest that girls and women are oppressed because they are created from the crooked rib of Adam "…. And if anyone tries to straighten it, he will have to break it" (*From a Crooked Rib* 170). The above statement by Awill seems to suggest that the female gender is a second class citizen simply fashioned for men's manipulation.

"From a Crooked Rib" is a figurative expression that makes reference to the female characters in the novel. Farah draws on a memorable line spoken by a character (Awill) as the title of his novel. Therefore, the title functions to emphasize the parallel themes of oppression and national consciousness. There are several levels on which we can interpret Farah's title. First is the actual implied statement made by Awill concerning the subordinate role of the female gender. The second is the interpretation of Ebla's quest for freedom and subsequent strategies employed to

resist male subjugation which only ends in negotiation and complementarity. Despite Ebla's continuous quest to escape patriarchal oppression, we see her at the end of the story, literally reconciling with her first husband Awill, the man who has raped and cheated on her several times. Ebla's statement foreshadows this reunion "I am responsible for the death of my grandfather…. Awill was the only husband I married willingly…" (*From a Crooked Rib* 158). We can move on to the symbolic meaning of the title. The narrator (Awill) makes a point in telling the readers that Ebla as his wife is part of his crooked rib. In a wider context, Farah depicts the experiences of Ebla as a symbolic representation of the condition of the female gender in Somalia and their overall dependence on men for survival.

Vera and Farah employ symbols and images in their novels to adequately capture the oppression and subjugation of their girl characters and their inabilities to pass beyond the limits of these bizarre challenges.

Motif is an aspect of language that is repeated in several parts of the selected novels. According to Abrams, motif is an "element—a type of incident, device, or formula—which recurs frequently in literature" (101). Significantly, there are discernible motifs in the selected novels namely: journey and slavery motifs. These motifs are recurring or dominant elements in the selected novels as well as the stylistic devices the selected novelists use to explore their theme of violence and female assertiveness.

According to Okereke, "mobility is fundamental in the construction of consciousness" ("The Journey As Trope…" 91). Indeed, in Emecheta's *The Bride Price*, Aku-nna's consciousness is raised through her physical and psychological journeys. Okereke observes that "it is a physical and psychological journey that explores the female predicament in the process of growing up"

("The Journey As Trope…" 91). Aku-nna's physical journey unfolds in three physical phases—movement from Lagos to Ibuza, forced movement from the dance rehearsal arena to Okoboshi's family house as an abducted bride, and escape from Okoboshi's family house in Ibuza to Ughelli. The psychological journey of Aku-nna is only in one phase which leads to a distorted view of reality. In fact, her psychological journey creates a new emotional growth that equips her with radical rebellious traits.

In exploring the journey motif as a recurring stylistic device in *The Bride Price*, Emecheta uses Aku-nna's journey to expose the readers to the oppressive nature of Ibuza patriarchal community and the efforts the protagonist makes towards self-actualization and emancipation. Aku-nna travels from Lagos where she grew up with her parents to Ibuza, a rustic village, after the death of her father. During her journey from Lagos to Ibuza, Aku-nna observes the sharp differences between the modern city of Lagos and the traditional simple rural life in Ibuza. She however learns that Ibuza, in mid-western Nigeria, is much more traditional than Lagos. This first phase of Aku-nna's journey is a physical journey into the Ibuza patriarchal traditional setting and values. Aku-nna's journey is significant because she is exposed to oppressive patriarchal tradition that denigrates the female gender. This denigration challenges her education and freedom of choice in her stepfather's house. This and other unfair treatment meted out on her pushes her to revolt against the instituted patriarchal ideology that limits her rights as an individual.

The second phase of Aku-nna's journey is a journey of maturity and self-assertion. Although Aku-nna has finished her standard six in Ibuza with the help of her mother, her rebellious assertive nature emerges when, after experiencing menstruation, she is abducted by Okoboshi as

a bride. This abduction pushes her to embark on another physical journey of escape from forced marriage to consensual marriage with Chike in Ughelli. This journey becomes a journey of experience— subjugation and escape from patriarchal stronghold. Unfortunately, Aku-nna's physical escape from patriarchal subjugation leads to a psychological journey that leads to neurosis and finally to her death.

Slavery as a motif is evident in Emecheta's *The Bride Price*. Emecheta attacks the Ibuza people's insensitivity in subjecting the girl-child to slavery. To Emecheta, forced marriage is slavery because a girl is subjected to marriage without her consent. Aku-nna is abducted by Okoboshi's family like a common slave. The Ibuza tradition supports this act of slavery through the tradition of "isi nmo" (*The Bride Price* 132). The implication of the tradition of "isi nmo" is that the girl child remains trapped in a union that denigrates her self-worth and leaves her without a choice. Therefore, the general perception of the Ibuza community is that the girl child is a slave girl, a manipulative tool that can be used for men's special need. To prove the above point, Okonkwo's selfish plan to marry Aku-nna off to a rich man in exchange for an attractive bride price is a good example. For Emecheta, the girl child is a slave who is sold and bought at will by oedipal figureheads— fathers, step-fathers, husbands etc. In fact, Emecheta seems to suggest through Okoboshi's attitude towards Aku-nna on the night of her abduction that the relation between girls and their prospective husbands is like that between a slave and her master. To Emecheta, marriage in Ibuza is a form of slavery.

Additionally, Emecheta extends the metaphor of the enslaved Ibuza woman to the experiences of Ma Blackie who is inherited by Okonkwo, her late husband's brother. The mentality of women as slaves makes allowance for Ma Blackie to subject herself as a slave to Okonkwo. She sees him as the author of her happiness after so many years of barrenness. The narrator comments that

Ma Blackie "…was so deliriously happy that she would give in to anything rather than upset the man who was the author of her present happiness" (*The Bride Price* 111). From this premise, Emecheta imbues Aku-nna with revolutionary assertive traits to reject the perception of girls and women as slaves in marriage.

In *Under the Tongue*, Vera depicts the journey motif as a psychological journey which leads to psychosis. Zhizha's journey into the world of trauma is as a result of her violent sexual experience. It is significant to note that Zhizha's psychological journey alters her identity and her ability to coherently narrate her experience. As a result, she struggles to replace her traumatic experience with a different narrative construction replete with imagery. To construct a narrative memory, Zhizha employs images, metaphoric language and flashback which manifest in dreams to explore a surrealistic world that has captured her consciousness. Unfortunately, she remains in that neurotic state the end of the novel.

In *From a Crooked Rib*, Farah also explores the journey motif as a stylistic device towards female emancipation. Farah begins his novel with physical and psychological mobility. The narrator observes that, "Ebla desired, more than anything to fly away; like a cock which has unknotted itself from the string tying its leg to the wall…. She wanted to fly away from dependence on the seasons, the seasons which determine the life or death of the nomads…" (*From a Crooked Rib* 13). In fact, Farah inscribes "mobility (physical and psychological) as the starting point of female consciousness in Muslim culture that imposes immobility on the female" (Okereke "The Journey As Trope…" 91). Indeed, this journey is a journey of growth into consciousness raising for the protagonist.

From a Crooked Rib is held together and organized around certain journey rhythms and journey motifs (movements) that act as centripetal forces, making for cohesion in the various elements of the novel. First, there is the rhythm of resistance and physical motion on Ebla's part, a rhythm that provides an important thematic concern revealing the escape routes which Ebla takes to negotiate a space with men (Tiffo and Awill). Farah's artistic arrangement of these rhythms and movements is a credit both on his artistic insight and on his novelistic technique. Farah arranges each movement so that it appears more complicated and grievous than the preceding one, assuming a deeper dimension in Ebla's pitiful march towards negotiation with men.

'Movement' in *From a Crooked Rib* has many semantic implications and Farah's exploration of these implications is a laudable achievement of his artistic intuition. The term, 'movement', in one sense, means 'physical motion between points in space' and in another sense; it means 'motion of the mind or feelings (emotion)'. In essence, Ebla literally tries to escape from patriarchal oppression each time there is a movement. When Ebla first escapes from her nomadic environment, her scornful embittered grandfather could not understand why she should abandon and disregard the Somali tradition of being married off to a man based on his choice. This first escape is indeed a movement that shows Ebla's consciousness about her plight as a girl. Ebla's movement as a motion of the 'mind or emotions' describes her psychological disposition or feelings towards societal, cultural and individual maltreatment or oppression of the girl-child as a result of her gender. To Ebla, "… the allotment of assignments denoted the status of a woman, that she was lower in status than a man, and that she was weak. … (*From a Crooked Rib* 13).

The journey in Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* unfolds in three movements—first, second and third movements. Each movement depicts an escape from patriarchal oppression and subjugation

which equips Ebla with a new experience as well as some assertive traits that enable her to explore her physical, emotional and psychological growth.

The first movement of Ebla's journey is an escape from the imposing limitations of a traditional society to empowerment through space and time. Ebla chooses to revolt against patriarchal subjugation by escaping from her nomad rural setting to Belet Wene to avoid an arranged marriage with an old man (Giumaleh). This journey is a movement away from the traditional Somalia Muslim culture that subjects girls to forced marriage through bartering.

The second movement depicts a physical journey from the urban setting of Belet Wene to the city of Mogadiscio. Ebla flees Belet Wene with the widow's nephew (Awill) without the consent of her cousin, (Gheddi). Ebla escapes because Gheddi like her grandfather wants to marry her off to a broker as a wife. In the third movement, Ebla makes a revolutionary movement to obstruct patriarchal marital law by marrying Tiffo as her second husband. This third movement is a physical movement from Awill's house to Tiffo's house as a new bride. The third movement shows Ebla's revolutionary stance and assertiveness to seek for equality and freedom of choice and expression. The third movement also captures the climax of the story, Ebla's marriage with Tiffo drives her to self-examination and deep reflection. Through Ebla's speech, the reader x-rays the false consciousness which has blinded her mode of reasoning towards male chauvinism. Ebla reflects on her experiences and comes to the conclusion that she is still trapped in the web of men. She escapes from the old man, Giumaleh, only to end up with another old man, Tiffo. She becomes aware of her position and thus confesses her dealings with men: "Giumaleh, I never saw him. It was only verbally done between him and my grandfather. Diris made an arrangement with my cousin…. Awill was the only husband I married willingly…" (*From a Crooked Rib* 158).

Indeed, Ebla learns through her experiences and assertive journey for emancipation. She learns that Somalia culture denigrates the female gender and leaves her without a choice. In fact, Ebla's bitter experiences as a bartered girl and a social misfit who marries a second husband for revenge teaches her great lessons. These experiences are vital in raising her consciousness. Okereke observes that "experience is thus a vital weapon in woman's survival and achievement of growth. The journey becomes a journey of growth from innocence to knowledge, from naivety to experience" ("The Journey As Trope…" 95). By escaping from two planned marriages, eloping with Awill and marrying Tiffo, Ebla has gained experience through her journey.

The motif of slavery is also a recurring element in Farah's *From a Crooked Rib*. Significantly, Farah attacks the Somali cultural milieu for treating girls like slaves. In the novel, Ebla's individual right to freedom of choice is abused and denied. In fact, through the experiences of Ebla, Farah seems to suggest that Ebla lives in a patriarchal society that places constraints on the girl child's concept of life. Ebla is bartered like animals for marriage proposals by her grandfather and cousin, Gheddi, without her consent. She serves as a slave girl to Gheddi's wife, performing mean roles of milking cows, feeding other animals and nursing Gheddi's baby. In essence, Farah stresses that the Somali society exploits girls through a system of assigned and devalued roles. Ebla's status as a slave girl is further seen when Gheddi uses her as a smuggling channel for his illegal business. Farah's representation of the girl child as a slave in Somalia is further seen in Awill's inhuman act of rape that violates Ebla's right. This act of violence is an abuse of human rights which exposes male chauvinism and men's perception of girls as a mere property to be owned and used. To liberate Ebla from male chauvinism, Farah imbues her with assertive traits to revolt against patriarchal oppression and subjugation. Unfortunately, Ebla succumbs to the same fate she wishes to escape— this shows a cyclical structure because she

ends where she started from, though with more experience, knowledge and power in gender issues.

Asika also joins other novelists to explore the journey motif as a device towards female self-actualization. Tamara in *Tamara* chooses to map out a new life for herself outside her father's oppressive mansion. It is an emotional journey she embarks on to seek for love and companionship. Tamara's emotional journey entangles her with a relationship with Obed who leaves her pregnant and emotionally shattered. In fact, Tamara's failure in her emotional journey of love exposes her to a physical journey from Nigeria to Italy. She embarks on this physical journey as a trafficked girl in need of help. In this journey, we sympathize with Tamara because she is not aware of her condition as a trafficked girl. It is in this physical journey also that Tamara succumbs to prostitution. Chukwuma observes that "on the physical side, this involves a distancing, a far remove to a new place which makes its own demands and sets its own standards….The journey is appreciated on the symbolic level where it involves a metamorphosis in orientation and goals on the part of the traveller. In moving from the interior to the exterior or the limelight, the heroine sheds her personality" ("Beyond Marriage…" 84). The underlying significance is that Tamara becomes very assertive when she is trapped in the web of patriarchy and pimps who are agents of subjugation. But unfortunately, intra-gender oppression and male jingoistic attitude overwhelm her whole system of reasoning to the extent that she becomes a social misfit – a prostitute.

Asika's protagonist is violently immersed in interpersonal relationships with other characters in the novel as she embarks on a metaphorical journey of liberation. This journey is a movement away from emotional abuse. Okereke observes that "movement can be liberating for the female gender because it affords her social, mental, emotional and psychological expansion" ("Journey

as Trope…" 100). In Asika's novel, Tamara is liberated from her father's abusive behaviour through her escape. In fact, Tamara's escape as captured in the journey motif (physical, emotional and metaphorical) shapes the novelistic form. In the story, Asika traces the physical and psychological journey of Tamara (who is naïve) from her father's house to the streets of Nigeria, to Italy and London as a prostitute. Tamara's assertiveness and quest for liberation are strongly motivated by her father's dictatorial attitude. Tamara seeks for liberation from her father's overbearing attitude, but in the process, she is exposed to more violence as she tries to understand the complexity of human relationships. Tamara's quest for freedom and emotional stability is not successful. This is seen in the concatenation of events that mar her escape. But in the process, she gains an insight into herself and attains maturity through her bizarre experiences. This maturity pushes her to ask her father for forgiveness in her letter.

In *Tamara*, the motif of slavery is captured in the acts of human trafficking and sexual abuse. Trafficking and sexual exploitation of girls for commercial purposes denote an act of slavery. Asika seems to suggest that Tamara is a slave to the pimps that use her body to make money. This slave-like condition starts in her father's house because she is constantly locked in her room as a girl child (*Tamara* 9-10). This slave-like condition in her family house pushes Tamara to escape her family house, but unfortunately she succumbs to another form of slavery by befriending Obed who exploits her sexually, impregnates and leaves her devastated. Due to her circumstances, she is deceived and trafficked to Italy as a sex slave. As a trafficked girl, Tamara does not claim ownership of her body. She is constantly threatened and forced to engage in sexual activities with men. This type of enslavement limits Tamara's rights to freedom of choice on matters relating to sexual experiences. In essence, her basic human rights are denied. Based on this denial of human rights, Asika condemns human trafficking and sex slavery.

To achieve liberation from patriarchal oppression, the three female characters in Emecheta's *The Bride Price*, Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* and Asika's *Tamara* escape from their first environment to new environments. In line with the above view, Chukwuma asserts that "most authors present the going-away motif as a necessary step to self actualization" ("The Identity of Self" xii). Emecheta, Farah and Asika employ the journey motif as a strategy for their girl characters to escape from male chauvinism or subjugation towards self-actualization. Just like Aku-nna escapes from forced marriage and elopes with Chika to Ughelli, Ebla twice also escapes from forced marriages. Tamara on her own also escapes from the patriarchal web of her father to an entirely new environment where her freedom of movement is denied. One thing is clear, Emecheta, Farah and Asika have employed the journey as a vehicle for female liberation and self-actualization in patriarchal environments that have no space for female freedom.

Irony is also an aspect of language used in exploring the selected novels. Irony as a stylistic device denotes the use of words to express something other than their literal intention. According to Eric Partridge, irony denotes "stating the contrary of what is meant, a direct contrast between two things" (*Usage and Abusage…* 230). J.A Cuddon in *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literacy* further observes that "irony involved the perception or awareness of a discrepancy and their results or between appearance and reality" (460). David Crystal in *An Encyclopedic Dictionary of Language and Languages* defines irony as a "language which expresses a meaning other than that literally conveyed by words, usually for humorous or dramatic effect" (96).

In the creation of the character of Tamara in *Tamara*, Asika shows himself as an expert in irony. There is indeed a contradiction between circumstances and expectations; that is, the condition contrary to what Tamara expects in her quest or journey for liberation as well as the reader's expectations about her. Asika uses an ironic mode to capture the derogatory phases of Tamara's

experiences – as a girl whose father is wealthy and influential (no ideal family, no normal childhood), and a character who has violent relationships with men in her quest for emotional or psychological liberation. It is obvious that Tamara abhors prostitution; this is seen in her statement to Senorita: "if you love me I want you to take me right out of this house to a plane for Nigeria….if you don't, I will run straight to any police station and report all of you"(*Tamara* 115). But as the story reaches the climax, we see Tamara embracing prostitution as a pattern of living.

From the foregoing, Asika suggests that because of Tamara's naïve nature, she becomes the blunt end of the dramatic ironies presented in the novel. The more Tamara tries to escape from her father's overbearing attitude, the more she finds herself in situations and relationships that are emotionally and psychologically damaging. In the novel, irony shrouds Tamara's journey for self-actualization. The deepening irony reaches its peak when the once vulnerable and moral seeking character, Tamara confesses her achievement in a profession she once abhorred:

> Father, I know that you will read all these parts with shame but your daughter later became a full time prostitute and was reputed for it. Father, I made money, I really made money quite enough to buy a house here and train quite a number of people. The last time Senorita came to see me, she could hardly recognize me. My profile surprised her. She advised me to be cautious but the advice was useless. I was already there at the centre of it all. There could hardly be a day I did not carry up to eight men. My worst day was the day I had only two and I could not sleep. Father, if you would wish to find me, ask about Tamara, the only Nigerian girl, that's my honour, my title, my regalia, my armour! (*Tamara* 118)

Finally, it is ironic that Tamara loses her race in prostitution as she becomes critically ill as a result of a badly damaged kidney. It is also ironic that Tamara has a target in life which is never fulfilled – "I still needed my health, at least my target was to hit a jackpot in Italy, and I would travel to Spain, from Spain I would fly to the United Kingdom, finish my school. Leeds University was my target. At Leeds I would put my whole past behind me and concentrate on my

studies'"(*Tamara* 129). It is ironic that after finding true love and happiness in a relationship with Carlos who donates one of his kidneys to save her life, Tamara who is heavily pregnant with Carlos's baby becomes critically sick with cancer of the liver. Indeed, there is a rhythmic exchange of happiness and pain as the protagonist tries to navigate back to her normal life. Tamara wins Carlos' heart and marries him on her sickbed to give him legal rights to their child after her death. Not satisfied with her life, she decides to intimate her father about her bizarre experiences and ask for his forgiveness. She seeks for forgiveness because she wants a better life for her daughter. She doesn't want her daughter to follow her line of action. Tamara pleads to her father in the letter:

> I have discussed and pleaded with Carlos and he has accepted my plea. The baby belongs to him but when she grows up, I want her to come to Nigeria and see you. Please do not deny her that favour of seeing you. Save her soul father, she is only a child. Never judge her with the crime and atrocities of her mother. (*Tamara* 147)

It is ironic that the father Tamara tries to escape is from the same person she wishes her daughter to visit after her death. There is no doubt that her father's paternalistic plan to control his daughter (Tamara), who hates a life of isolation laced with verbal abuse, becomes psychologically burdensome to her. This tyrannical way of parenting makes it difficult for Tamara to love her father, causing her to revolt with horrible consequences on her emotional and physical well-being. In essence, the quest for an ideal relationship creates conditions that plunge Tamara into violence. This is the fault of Tamara's superego which strives for satisfaction and perfection. Tamara adopts repression and displacement as defence mechanisms to shield herself from the stress of her conflict. In her act of displacement as a defence mechanism, she satisfies her impulse by blaming her father in the letter for her traumatic experiences. Tamara's repression is an unconscious defence mechanism whereby her ego pushes her disturbing feelings, ideas or thoughts to find space to seek for her father's forgiveness. It is indeed ironic that the patriarchal

figure Tamara hates in the beginning of the novel is being showered with greetings of love in the concluding part of the letter: “till then, my father, my dadday…! I love you! Hope you still do? Extend my love to Kizito if you ever find him….Oh! Our family, our love, our bond! This is all that remains of us. I am waiting and watching father, hope I will not wait forever? Hope …” (*Tamara* 149).

Farah in *From a Crooked Rib* makes use of irony. It is ironic that Ebla who escapes from her rural setting to the city to avoid a forced marriage with an old man willingly marries another old man called Tiffo. Indeed, Ebla’s attitude is opposed to her decisions and actions. It is then obvious that Somalia as an Islamic society does not support the idea of female liberation and self-assertiveness. This explains why Ebla tilts towards womanist ideology which employs negotiation and accommodation to resolve her conflict.

In conclusion, Emecheta, Vera, Farah and Asika employ special use of language to depict their girl characters’ violent experiences. Emecheta imbues Aku-nna with oratorical skills to challenge Okoboshi, her oppressor. Indeed, Aku-nna’s assertive language gears her towards escape and quest for emancipation. Farah on his part captures his girl character’s assertive use of language against male chauvinism by expressing her thoughts on female oppression. While Ebla in *From a Crooked Rib* achieves her dream of equality in marriage through her assertive language, Zhizha in *Under the Tongue* becomes silenced by her rape. Indeed, Zhizha’s attempt to communicate her violent sexual experience results in fragmentation and repetition that evoke mental images. Significantly, Asika’s use of simple language to communicate his heroine’s traumatic experiences draws the attention of the readers. Basically, the selected novels employ imagery, symbolism, motifs and irony to create experiences that are very convincing.

Setting

The "setting of a narrative work is the general locale and historical time in which its action occurs; the setting of an episode or scene within a work is the particular physical location in which it takes place" (Abrams 157). The general setting of Emecheta's *The Bride Price*, for example is the colonial Nigerian society, and the setting for the scene in which Aku-nna encounters patriarchal oppression is the Igbo traditional Ibuza community. The opening episode is set in Lagos, a city in Nigeria. Lagos and Ibuza as physical settings are important elements in generating the atmosphere of girl-child oppression in the novel.

The setting as an element of fiction is very important in understanding the concept of foregrounding and backgrounding. In essence, foregrounding and backgrounding are significant in exploring Ibuza patriarchal conflicting perception about sexuality and gender in *The Bride Price*. These conflicting ideas have possible negative and positive effects on sexes through the discussion of meaning. Poynton suggests that "ideological meanings come into view as a result of power configurations where ideology not only reflects the society that produced it, but remains bound together to reinforce its own identity" (18). In the novel, we see this in Emecheta's presentation of the Igbo worldview, precisely, the Ibuza cultural milieu. This society as depicted by Emecheta has various taboos and customs that insist on the oppression and subjugation of girls and women in Ibuza community. These taboos are instituted in the visible and invisible traditional norms, deeply established in an unchallenged patriarchal structure of Ibuza community.

Emecheta foregrounds the conflict between male and female in Ibuza society by revealing the issues that result to discrimination in Igbo culture as a result of gender relations. According to Oloruntoba-Oju, "gender relations is power relations, hence the frequent construction of gender

in terms of the struggle for dominance between genders, or in terms of the conscious or unconscious negotiation of psychological, socio-economic and political space by the sexes and their protagonists" ("Language and Gender…" 213). One of these gendered relations is evident in the discrimination against girls and women:

> …when a woman was unclean, she must not go to the stream, she must not enter a household where the man of the family had either the '*Eze*' or '*Alor*' title – her uncle Okonkwo had the latter; if she went into such a house, the head of the family would die and the oracle would discover who the culprit was. She might be killed in broad daylight, but Ibuza people had always, psychological measures, to eliminate those who committed the abominable *alu*. (The *Bride Price* 91)

Therefore, it is normal for girls and women to adhere to such norms because of their physical and psychological consequences. Other "discriminative tendencies" include the general belief that the male gender is superior and very competent while the female gender is docile and very vulnerable (Poynton 18). All these discriminative tendencies are associated with different cultural or social meaning based on gender roles ingrained in the Ibuza society. In fact, most of these prescribed roles discriminate against the female gender and perpetually bind them in chains. In essence, patriarchal limitations forcibly impose obedience or servitude which affects the lives of girls and women in the Ibuza traditional setting. To this end, Emecheta's foregrounding technique in *The Bride Price* shows a special and distinctive characteristic of feminist revolt against patriarchal structure and the negative relative position that Ibuza cultural milieu gives to girls and women.

Emecheta's unfolding of the Ibuza social structure in *The Bride Price* is depicted in the foregrounding of Aku-nna's radical feminist spirit of revolt against patriarchal authority. We see this expressed in her action against Okoboshi who attempts to rape her (*The Bride Price*, 137). The revolt against patriarchy is seen in the novel when Aku-nna defies societal norms and elopes

with an Osu slave (Chike). Indeed, Aku-nna's defiant attitude and elopement with a slave lover depict Emecheta's radical feminist stance in opposing patriarchy. In the light of the foregoing, Marie Linton Umeh (2013) observes that:

> Buchi Emecheta has remained steadfast in her commitment to writing about the Nigerian experience from a woman's point of view. Emecheta has called attention to the subjugation of girls and women, and by extension, the subjugation of girls and women around the world. (2)

The adoption of rhetorical technique as lexical resources is also very evident in the novel. Emecheta employs suitable vocabulary to depict the setting and historical background of the novel. According to the narrator,

> Ibuza was on the western side of River Niger, in the area that was later to be referred to as the Mid-West State of Nigeria. However much the politicians might divide and redivide the map on paper, through, the inhabitants of the town remained Ibos. History – the oral records, handed down by word of mouth from one generation to the next – said they had migrated from Isu, a town to the east of the river, and although one could hardly be sure of such claims there was certainly evidence to support them. The traditions, taboos, superstition and sayings of Ibuza were very similar to those still found at Isu. (*The Bride Price* 73)

For example, in the novel, Emecheta presents the account of both the colonial Nigeria (Ibuza), traditional practices and the female experience. Western education, missionary church and British court form visible entities of the novel. For full appreciation of Emecheta's depiction of colonial experiences Umeh explains that:

> In *The Bride Price*, Emecheta explores many layers of conflict within the changing Igbo culture. The 1956 "Abolition of Osu System", enacted by Eastern House of Assembly, forbade Igbo people from inflicting punishments on the descendants of slaves. Before Nigeria's independence from British rule in 1960, the British native courts throughout Nigeria would only recognize native law and customs so long as they were 'not repugnant to natural justice and humanity or incompatible with any ordinance, especially in matters relating to marriage, land and inheritance'.(2)

In *The Bride Price*, the Ibuza community as a social setting encourages abduction. The act of kidnapping Aku-nna and the attempts to force her into an unwanted marriage violates the above stipulated standards and the basic freedom of choice. This is seen in the violation of the rights of Aku-nna and Chike to choose their own destiny in marriage (Umeh 2). Generally, the colonial setting of Emecheta's story is well backgrounded in order to notify the readers about the traditional and historical facts that contribute to depicting the novel. In the novel, traditional authority and customs could not obstruct the judgment given by the British court against Ibuza people who burnt Mr. Ofulue's cocoa plantation. According to the narrator:

> …Ofulue's sons and daughters pooled their resources and sued the Obidi family. The whole Ibuza came forward as witness against the Ofulues. But the law was based in English justice which did not make allowance for slaves, so the Ibuza people lost the case and were ordered to compensate the Ofulue family in kind. The free men had to plant new cocoa for the slave and the heavy fines were duly paid. (*The Bride Price* 155).

The author's use of the word 'English justice' in the above quotation is a good evidence of the conscious backgrounding of the British court in Ibuza community. In essence, there is a foregrounding of foreign culture and institution that reject traditional practices that are based on injustice. Also in chapter three of *The Bride Price*, titled 'Burial' Emecheta explores practices within the changing Igbo lifestyle. The authorial third-person point of view gives a brief background of the colonized Nigerian society during Odia's burial ceremony:

> Ezekiel Odia's funeral was, like all such ceremonies in colonial Africa, a mixture of the traditional and the European. Emphasis was always placed on the European aspect. The European ways were considered modern, the African old-fashioned. Lagos culture was such an unfortunate conglomeration of both that you ended up not knowing to which you belonged. In his lifetime, Ezekiel was a typical product of this cultural mix. He would preach the Gospel on Sundays, he would sing praises to the European living God…; but all this did not prevent calling in a native medicine-man when the occasion rose. (*The Bride Price* 29)

Emecheta also foregrounds the Igbo traditional life and institution of the Ibuza community. The readers are meant to see different types of customs (isi nmo), beliefs (menstruation taboo) and traditional titles like 'Eze', 'Ala', 'Obi' and 'Odoziani' (*The Bride Price* 93). The daily lives of Ibuza people revolve around western education, traditional practices and activities such as marriage, farming, ceremonial traditional dance and trading. In Emecheta's novel, the literal and figurative enslavement of the female protagonist corresponds with the expansion of European "master" cultures into an enthralled and colonized Ibuza (Nigerian) society. Set in the early years of the twentieth century, Emecheta's narrative unfolds at a time when colonization is at its height and Nigeria is being taken over by Great Britain.

The general historical setting of Vera's *Under the Tongue* is the colonized Zimbabwe which is characterized by "anti-colonial resistance and the uprisings against the British occupation known as the first Chimurenga (the 1896-7 Rebellion)" (Oboe 128). Vera's story "is set during the years of the armed struggle which tells of the survival of those who stayed behind. This is the compilation that launched the career of the renowned Zimbabwean author…" (Toivanen 66). The above setting gives the general overview of the background that exposes the female gender to different forms of violence. To address this confrontation, Vera's fictional creation demonstrates what happens to the vulnerable (women and girl children) when depressed soldiers and western men exploit girls and women on Zimbabwe's landscapes. Based on the above assertions, Anna-Leena Toivanen observes that "what is characteristic of Vera's work is that the stories of the women are always set in temporally specified contexts in Zimbabwe's national history" (65).

The physical and psychological settings in Vera's novel are replete with scenery and landscapes such as rocks, land, river, sky, moon, mountains (*Under the Tongue* 127). As a traumatically induced narrative, the setting of Vera's story is basically created from the fragmented thoughts of the girl protagonist which is captured with the stream of consciousness technique. Obviously, the mental condition of Vera's protagonist provides little or no evidence of physical settings in the novel since most of the experiences are narrated by the mentally deranged Zhizha. Vera's inability to clearly depict a physical setting that displays Zimbabwe's landscape is attributed to the mental state of her character. However, Vera is able to capture the historical period in which the novel is situated by generating an atmosphere depicting the end of war—"then there was cease-fire and the women poured milk to the ground and welcomed the men home even when they had not seen them walk back, they sought them, their names and sheltering presences, their pounding hearts, and many scars" (*Under the Tongue* 222). In essence, the atmosphere of war causes the patriarchal oppression and subjugation of the female gender. This explains why Vera depicts the challenges a growing girl has to face due to colonialism and war. In Katrin Berndt's view, Vera's novels are set in "the times of the liberation war, but in contrast to realistic novels, they often portray the life of civilians in rural areas and describe the changes of everyday life and the rising brutality these people have to face" (53).

The setting of Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* is situated in Somalia. The general setting of the novel conveys the picture of an Islamic religious traditional setting that offers no space for female emancipation and exploration of basic human rights. This depiction gears Farah's fictional creation towards reconstructing Somalia to give meaning to female existence. In view of the above, Meriem observes that in Farah's fiction, "women's struggle for freedom and for the

right to voice themselves becomes an allegory for a nation in search of its voice. New womanhood becomes interchangeable with a new Somalia…" (84).

The physical settings such as Ebla's nomad setting, Belet Wene and Mogadiscio provide an atmosphere that oppresses and subjugates the protagonist to different forms of violence. These acts of violence are evidently linked to the patriarchal mentality and structures inherent in the above settings. In Ebla's rural nomadic encampment and Belet Wene, she is exposed to bartering and forced marriage. Also, in the city of Mogadiscio, Ebla is raped by Awill. In essence, all these settings are synonymous with girl child oppression and subjugation.

The settings of Asika's *Tamara* are situated in the Postcolonial/contemporary Nigerian society, precisely the eastern Igbo region and Europe (Italy). The geographical location in Nigeria, that is, the house of Tamara's father provides an atmosphere for domestic violence. The mansion of Tamara's father initiates the main backdrop and mood of the story which forces the protagonist to embark on a long elusive quest for self-actualization and emancipation. Significantly, Italy as a geographic location within the narrative provides an atmosphere for girl-child trafficking and sexual molestation. In essence, Nigeria and Italy as physical environments or surroundings in which different events that take place in the story are important in influencing the choices and experiences of the girl protagonist in the novel. The function of the above settings is of great importance because it has immense effect on the plot of the story as well as the girl character. In essence, the settings help to establish the mood or the atmosphere of the scene that causes violence in the story. This results in the development of the plot into a more realistic form, resulting in more plausible characters. In other words, by capturing the mood, setting helps the readers to relate themselves to the condition of the girl character.

Significantly, space and time are the major elements of setting explored in Asika's *Tamara*. The time (historical) setting of *Tamara* is important as trafficking of the girl-child for commercial sexual exploitation is a recent phenomenon. Also the Nigerian setting (Tamara's home etc) is toxic; the Italian setting creates the space and circumstances in which female characters engage in the act of prostitution. Indeed, Asika symbolically projects Italy as a social setting where many migrants, especially trafficked girls embrace prostitution as the only means of survival. In essence, the time (historical period) and spaces (physical environment) in which the story of Tamara is situated is very convincing since they cleary fit into the contemporary societies depicted in the novel.

In conclusion, setting as an aspect of style employed by the selected African novelists has helped to create an aura of verisimilitude in the stories especially in detailing social contexts that create circumstances that violate the rights of the girl-child. These social contexts have helped to properly place the heroines in the positions that cause physical, emotional and psychological damage.

Narrative Technique

Narrative technique as one of the stylistic devices is very important in exploring prose fictional works. This is to say that the value attached to any given fictional work does not only depend "on its impact but on how the story is told" (Onyekwere 124). Therefore, narrative technique becomes a good literary tool that enhances a writer's style of writing. The stream of consciousness technique is extensively employed in the novels of Vera and Farah. This technique uses monologue to capture free expression of inner feelings and thoughts of the individual female protagonists. It also helps the girl characters to comment on their conditions as well as evaluate them.

In *Under the Tongue*, Vera employs multiple narrative voices to explore her theme. She switches between the first-person and third-person narrative viewpoints. In Vera's use of the first-person narrative viewpoint, the narrator, Zhizha speaks as "I", and is herself a character in the story. The example below depicts Vera's use of the first person narrative viewpoint: 'I call for Grandmother but my voice sinks, disappears…. I watch her mothering strange as her visit waking me from sleep. I am your mother, she says, while standing at the doorway. I do not remember her face or her voice. I have forgotten my mother' (*Under the Tongue* 207)

Vera adopts a third-person point of view in depicting some recollected past experiences of the characters. The third-person narration is someone (author) outside the story who refers to all the characters in the story by name, or as "he," "she," "they". The use of the third-person narrative point of view is evident in chapters – two, six, eight, ten, twelve, eighteen, twenty, twenty-two and twenty-four. The quotation below indicates Vera's use of the third-person narrative point of view in introducing Zhizha's parents to the readers:

> Runyararo and Muroyinwa shared a small room in Dangambvura. Their room was divided into two indistinct spaces by a short fraying curtain. The curtain had large blue stars on it that were faded and torn. A hard string ran through a seam at the top of the cloth, and collapsed at the center where it carried most of the weight of cloth… (*Under the Tongue* 205)

In *Under the Tongue*, the first-person narration is done by a single narrator (Zhizha), who reports other characters' thoughts and feelings; while the third-person narration is done by the author to intimate the readers about various conflicts of the story. Vera uses flashback to recall the traumatic experience of Zhizha and also to show how traumatic memory inhibits the growth and development of the girl-child in childhood. Therefore, in discussing *Under the Tongue* as a trauma novel, 'traumatic memory' (Dodhy 235) as a narrative technique is employed to depict how trauma occurs as a result of bizarre experiences or deep wound which causes an emotional

shock. Dodhy explains that “traumatic memory is the memory of a traumatic event that was not completely established by the victim at the time of its occurrence, which suggests that it cannot be consciously recollected by the victim when he or she wishes to do so” (235).

In *Under the Tongue*, Vera attempts to transform the traumatic memory into a narrative memory. According to Michael Schmid, “narrative memory is not the act of remembering something that happened in the past but an act of recreating the past, of changing the memory” (1). Schmid further explains that “the narrative memory is a way for trauma survivors to make sense of their experiences and the new situation that resulted out of the traumatic event” (2). To construct a narrative memory, Vera employs images, metaphoric language and flashback which manifest in dreams to explore a surrealistic world that has captured the consciousness of the protagonist. The images the protagonist (Zhizha) constructs in her dreams and nightmares suggest that she is struggling to replace traumatic experiences with a different narrative construction to lessen her sorrow:

> No, in my dreaming. My hands held tight, my fingers crushed, my bones broken dry like rock so broken. I see Grandmother, a harvest of weeds covering her arms. Grandmother, embracing my cry. Father drowned while he slept. … Father pulls me down into the river. He pulls at my dream and I sink beneath the pounding which falls through my eyes. (*Under the Tongue* 125)

The above quotation supports Pierre Janet’s assertion that conscious experiences are part of much more extensive fixed ideas that are seen in dreams or traumatic memories which “infiltrate” personal consciousness and disturb it (Hart and Horst 7). Eagleton also supports the above assertion by stating that “dreams provide our main, but not our only, access to the unconscious” (137). In essence, by constructing her own narrative, Zhizha is exposed to the reality of her own experiences.

Zhizha's traumatic experience is mainly remembered through sporadic fragments of the events that happened. Indeed, Zhizha's painful memories have done one thing to her – it has altered her identity. She lacks the willpower and stable mental state to establish her identity. Zhizha suffers from multiple personality disorder. She constantly repeats the personal pronouns 'my' to indicate that the violent experiences solely affect her as a young girl in her developing stage (childhood). Vera wants the readers to understand the mental state of her protagonist by allowing her to voice her personal loss of identity which is captured in the repetition of the word, 'voice': 'But my voice is lost…. My voice blinded. My voice falling. My voice empty and forgotten. My voice slips in a dying whirl that grows small and faint. My cry is stolen' (*Under the Tongue*, 123). The constant repetition of 'my voice' in the above quotation shows that the protagonist has lost the power of uttering her traumatic experiences. This explains why she heavily relies on her grandmother's thoughts and utterances to escape her pains: 'Only Grandmother's voice remembers me. Her voice says that before I learned to forget there was a river in my mouth. She cries about many tongues which lie in the mouth, withered, without strength to speak the memory of their forgetting' (*Under the Tongue* 121). The above quotation suggests that Zhizha's Grandmother has many untold violent experiences as an oppressed woman which is worsened by her granddaughter's violent experiences.

Significantly, *Under the Tongue* opens with a monologue. Monologue is a long uninterrupted utterance that monopolizes a narrative. Vera uses monologue as a special technique to capture her protagonist's state of mind and thoughts. M. Kopf observes that,

> The narration of the story unfolds from an inside perspective, however, leading us to Zhizha's mental language and her ways of perceiving, we as readers become witness to an eloquent muteness — a muteness that in fact is a long and passionate struggle for words, a struggle to name what happened and is still happening. It is a struggle to remember and to tell what made and makes her mute. (249-250)

Zhizha expresses her emotional anxiety through a monologue. She is totally overwhelmed by her inability to utter her pains to her grandmother, the only blood relation that is a witness to her violation. Zhizha's voice is silenced, because she is surprised at her father's violent act towards her. This explains why Zhizha defines her experience using the destructive powerful forms of nature such as lightning and rocks. "Father whispers an embrace of lightening, I bite hard on my tongue, hold my breath deep in my chest…. Lightning finds me, embraces the moon, finds me fallen from the sky" (*Under the Tongue* 123). The above quotation could be seen as Zhizha's attempt to construct the act of her rape using borrowed images of nature. One thing is very clear – Zhizha finds it difficult to believe that her biological father is the perpetrator of that violent sexual act.

In reading *Under the Tongue*, monologue helps readers to understand that Zhizha's response to the act of rape is strongly linked to psychological trauma. To throw more light on the above stipulated views, Judith Herman observes that the term psychological trauma is mainly "an affliction of the powerless" (33). Herman further observes that,

> At the moment of trauma, the victim is rendered helpless by overwhelming force. Therefore, traumatic events overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection, and meaning. Traumatic events are extraordinary, not because they occur rarely, but rather because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life. (33)

Vera employs repetition as a narrative technique to depict how the protagonist returns to the traumatic event which distorts her memory. The repetitive images of 'my voice' show that the protagonist has lost her sense of wholeness and therefore uses repetition to explore her traumatic memory. The lines below give a clearer vision of the use of repetition: "But my voice is lost….My voice blinded. My voice falling. My voice empty and forgotten. My voice slips in a dying whirl that grows small and faint. My cry is stolen" (*Under the Tongue* 123). The

protagonist's constant use of repetition is an indication that she has been silenced by her traumatic experience that she no longer reasons like a normal human being. This violation has indeed affected her existence and autonomy. The repeated word, 'my voice' denotes that she is referring to herself as the subject of pain humiliated by traumatic sexual experience. Therefore, the protagonist adopts the personal pronoun ('my, 1') to show that she is the one that has been emotionally and psychologically disoriented. The lines below are examples: "I cry but my cry meets silence. My voice has lost the promises of day. I hear my voice fall like a torrent down into my stomach. My voice meets rock, water, grows silent and dead" (124). Zhizha's monologue is a means of evaluating her condition which has limited her growth, consciousness and self-actualization.

Farah in writing *From a Crooked Rib* adopts the omniscient point of view which is a common term for:

> The assumption in a work of fiction that the narrator knows everything that needs to be known about the agents and events; that he is entirely free to move as he will in time and place, and to shift from character to character, reporting (or concealing) what he chooses of their speech and actions; and also that he has privileged access to a character's thoughts and feelings and motives, as well as to his overt speech actions. (Abrams 134)

The narrative features of Farah's novel are also very interesting, especially the use of the third-person omniscient narrator to capture the inner dialogue and thoughts of all the characters. By allowing Ebla to express her feelings and condition, Farah's ultimate goal is to show more than tell. This is evident in situations where he allows the individual characters to express their thoughts using monologue. Farah uses monologue to x-ray the emotions and psychological disposition of his protagonist, Ebla.

One must not fail to draw attention to Farah's use of point of view to empower his protagonist. Farah is an intrusive narrator who not only reports but freely comments on his characters, evaluating their actions and motives and expressing his views about human life in general. The omniscient narrator introduces Ebla as a girl who wants to escape from patriarchal holds and thus engages in an emotional quest to liberate herself. According to the narrator, "Ebla had been toying with the idea of leaving home for quite some time. However, she did not know whether this would be temporary change of air — in a tow — or a permanent departure…" (*From a Crooked Rib* 8). The above quotation foreshadows Ebla's movements for self-assertion and empowerment in the novel. The omniscient narrator who knows the thoughts of every character gives the readers a clue to understanding the thoughts and feelings of Ebla as the protagonist. From the narrator, we can see where the sympathy and interest of Farah lies. In the beginning of the novel, Ebla is physically described by the narrator to also attract our sympathy towards her plight: "she was very tall, but this was not exceptional here. She stood six feet high. She would have been very beautiful, had it not been for the disproportion of her body. She thought about things and people in her own way, but always respected the old and the dead…" (*From a Crooked Rib* 8). The above description is in contrast with the way Farah describes Ebla's grandfather as an 'old man' who rains curses on a vulnerable granddaughter (*From a Crooked Rib* 6).

Farah employs point of view to disapprove patriarchal superstructures that oppress and limit the female gender. The omniscient narrative perspective helps readers to understand the way a given character perceives her oppression and relates with other characters. The way the omniscient narrator goes into the minds of different characters helps readers to understand what motivates

their actionS in the plot. These motivations are also perceived as the processes of characterization where a given character is defined by his or her attitudes and experiences.

Farah's use of the third person omniscient narrator allows the readers to get the story from the characters themselves. This is deduced from the characters' speech, thoughts and action—that is questioning of self through inner dialogue. In essence, Farah objectively presents his story without imposing himself on the narration. In the novel, Farah allows Ebla to question the demeaning gender inequality instituted by patriarchy. From Ebla's rhetorical questions, we can decipher that she is physically and psychologically tortured by Somalia's savage culture. She therefore interrogates herself by questioning the reality of women'S existence:

> But why is a woman, a woman? To give companionship to man? To beget him children? To do a woman's duty? But that is only in the house. What else? She asked herself. Surely a woman is indispensable to man, but do men realize it? (*From a Crooked Rib* 12)

Farah's narrative style is unique as a result of the density of his sentence structure and the unbroken flow of thought and awareness in the waking mind of the protagonist. In narrating Ebla's assertive nature for freedom from Asha's advice and manipulation, Farah employs the stream of consciousness to "capture the full spectrum and flow of his heroine's mental process in which sense of perceptions mingle with conscious and half-conscious thoughts, memories, feelings, and random associations" (Abrams 165).

> Ebla thought over the question many a time, and finally she made up her mind. 'Asha doesn't have to tell me what to do and what not to do…. It is me who marries or is divorced, so she doesn't have to put her nose into my private business. I will tell her to keep out of it. In future I am responsible for whatever I do. Tomorrow, I will tell her. Tomorrow. In future I will be myself and belong to myself, and my actions will belong to me. And I will, in turn, belong to them'. *(From a Crooked Rib* 142)

Monologue is also a special technique used by Farah to capture Ebla's inner dialogue and thoughts about the culture of valuing boys more than girls in Somali society. This is what Ebla perceives as gender inequality or discrimination that confers an inferior position oN girls, while boys are highly valued. Ebla comments:

> Why is it only the sons in the family who are counted? For sure this world is a man's – it is his dominion and is going to be his as long as women are oppressed as long as this remains the system of life. Nature is against women. If a woman wants to argue about her fundamental rights not being fulfilled by her husband, it is always a man that she must see –- at government office and every other place. Before she has opened her mouth, she is condemned to the grave. Aren't men the law? (*From a Crooked Rib* 84)

Farah allows Ebla to express herself in monologue so as to portray the pitiful condition of girls and women in Somalia. Ebla's monologue is very symbolic, because it shows her frantic efforts to escape from patriarchal subjugation. The monologue below summarizes her efforts:

> Woman? 'She asked in a grunting male voice, 'Are you a cheat?'
> 'Sometimes.'
> 'But why?'
> 'Because men cheat me.'
> 'I take revenge upon them.'
> 'Yes, but why?'
> 'I don't know, I am innocent. I don't know what to do. I don't know what i do sometimes. I do things; just do them without really getting myself involved. I put my faith in my man, but once I lose it, then it is hard to regain it. It is jealousy and insecurity that causes most misunderstanding.' (*From a Crooked Rib* 166)

Ebla interrogates herself in order to express her repressed emotions and make a stance that – men and women are equal irrespective of their biological differences. Also in the above quotation, Ebla is able to foreground the image of the female gender in Somalia society, as people whose bodies are constantly haunted by men's crooked sexual drive and chauvinistic behaviours. Through Ebla's voice, the readers are able to understand her pain and emotional torture in a male dominated society. From the above quotation, it is also clear that the *superego* is an important

factor in illustrating the fate of the protagonist in her act of rebellion and revenge against Oedipal figureheads. Her monologue suggests that she is disillusioned and wants to conquer Oedipal forces of domination, depression and oppression. Indeed, the unconscious sense of guilt, with the corresponding need for rebellion, satisfied through manipulating men like Tiffo, plays a decisive part in Ebla's willingness to revenge or challenge Awill's infidelity and oppression. Significantly, Farah's narrative techniques help to explore the theme of violence, self-assertion and self-actualization. Also, Farah's adoption of different narrative techniques helps to create an impact that provokes sympathy from the readers.

In Asika's *Tamara*, "framing" is an important narrative technique used in exploring the epistolary form of writing. The use of framing address in a fictional work is strongly connected to correspondence between characters. The correspondence may communicate everyday experiences or take the form of an appeal from one character to another in singular pronouns (I and you). In *Tamara*, the girl protagonist (Tamara) appeals to her father to forgive all the petty misdeeds of her youth so that she would "die in peace" (*Tamara* 148). In the letter, Tamara uses the pronoun 'I' for herself as the writer, and 'you' for her father as the addressee. Tamara narrates: "I have to stop here father…it is almost night. I have forgiven you, if you do the same I will die in peace. I strip myself of all the hatred I had for you" (*Tamara* 148).

Another feature of the epistolary genre evident in the novel is the "content of the letter". In any epistolary form, the content of the letter determines its shape. This is to say that the "language of the letter must correspond to the generally accepted rules of a particular sub-genre" (Toktagazin and Adilbekovab 5836). In writing *Tamara*, Asika employs both formal and informal expressions which are stylized as personal feelings and thoughts of the protagonist. This is done by employing some stylistic expressions and technique which are replete with ellipses.

"Dad…Daddy…I …I …wanted….wanted to show…you my report…." "I …I…I…I …was lost. The words refused to come forth, all my rehearsals flew away with the stern look in your eyes and anger in your voice. Thank God mother came to my rescure" (*Tamara* 15). The ellipses capture the protagonist's state of mind and make it difficult for her to communicate effectively. The ellipses also symbolize her unsteady state of mind, and helpless condition in the face of fear and anxiety. The above quotation is written by the girl protagonist to her father to indicate that they are mutual enemies, "I hated you father, I hated you" (*Tamara* 15).

One thing is clear, Asika employs the stream of consciousness technique to capture his protagonist's thoughts towards her father. From the above quotation, we will say that Asika's language is simple and clear. Every description is direct to the point the narrator wants to make. Almost all the words are familiar to an average reader. Asika's sentence construction is replete with repetition to further communicate the narrator's emotional instability.

The form or method of narration is very important in exploring the epistolary subgenre. The narration of experiences in the body of the letter is always presented in "the first person singular pronouns" (Toktagazin and Adilbekovab 5836). The story of Tamara is narrated using the first-person point of view as one of the frequently discussed narrative tactics. Tamara is the witness of the experiences she relates. This is evident in the use of the narrative "I". It is also very remarkable that the protagonist describes her pains and wishes through this narrative technique. Asika uses a single narrative or perspective that allows the reader to know the feelings and thoughts of the narrator. The narrator of this novel is obviously a young girl (Tamara) caught in the web of faulty parental background and domestic violence. The quotation below clearly depicts the above submissions:

> It was not only the report card scenario that made me hate you but that night I had a toothache you were nowhere to be found. You remember that day I had diarrhea. It was the night of my graduation. Our school had a party, my graduation party, but father, you were too busy to attend. That same night, during the presentation of gifts, I was crowned Miss Corolla High School, a title I was to carry beyond the shores of the school. That night, you were conspicuously absent. Many more events came and went, many that I never remembered. All of them made me hate you, but unknown to me, I was hating life and myself forever. (*Tamara* 17)

Asika adopts a monologic epistolary style. This means that experiences are detailed in a single letter written by a given character. The character's narration creates a subjective point of view making the novel a precursor of the feminist psychological novel. One strong point about this of writing technique is the protagonist's need to confess or express her thoughts which are susceptible to ridicule. Here, the narrator (Tamara) addresses the letter to a specific recipient – her father. In essence, Asika uses this epistolary form as a unique artistic technique to enhance his style.

In conclusion, Emecheta, Vera, Farah and Asika have successfully explored some stylistic devices like plot, language use (motifs, imagery, symbolism, irony), setting and narrative technique to depict their girl characters' struggles and quest for liberation from oppression and subjugation. The quests are geared towards self-emancipation in order to create a better and peaceful future for themselves. By explicating the above stylistic devices, the selected novelists for this research have plausibly explored the struggles of the girl characters in their novels in a bid to achieve self-actualization and full emancipation.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The first five chapters of this dissertation have explored the background of the study, dimensions of violence against the girl-child in the four selected novels – Emecheta's *The Bride Price*, Vera's *Under the Tongue*, Farah's *From a Crooked Rib*, Asika's *Tamara* and the aspects of style employed by the novelists in depicting the theme of violence. This chapter therefore, summarises and concludes the study. It goes further to give recommendations on how to curb gender-based violence against the girl-child.

In this study, an attempt has been made to examine gender-based violence and how the selected African novelists have tried to conceptualize it. It has been discovered that most of the experiences depicted by the novelists are similar in many ways despite their different geographical and cultural backgrounds. Consequently, because it is assumed that the girl-child's experiences contribute in shaping her personality, the study has discussed such factors that impede her growth and self-actualization. The intention declared at the beginning of this study is to examine various ways girl child's rights have been undermined, subverted and denied through the critical lens of feminism and psychoanalysis. In the selected novels, it is observed that all the girl protagonists have been denigrated, exploited, oppressed and subjugated during childhood. Therefore, using the theory of psychoanalysis, this study finds connections among the protagonists' unconscious mental processes as they try to cope with their feelings of inferiority and traumatic experiences. In all the selected novels, violent childhood experiences inhibit the physical and emotional growth of the girl characters by making them extremely rebellious or causing mental disturbances such as fear, anxiety, depression and neurosis. Specifically, in this

study, it is observed that all the girl characters end up frustrated, demoralized, depressed, unfulfilled, mentally ill or dead.

In this study, the selected novels of Buchi Emecheta, Yvonne Vera, Nurruddin Farah and Ikechukwu Asika are literary criticism of various forms of gender-based violence. The novels of Emecheta and Vera who are female writers are important in understanding how girls and women have come to view their subjectivity under patriarchy. The above women writers offer interesting points of comparison with Farah and Asika who are male writers, but write for the cause of the female gender. In this research, it has been ascertained that efforts by the selected novelists to create girl characters with assertive and rebellious dispositions have brought about the problem of doubtful psychological state of mind of the girl protagonists. In fact, all the girl protagonists end up displaying some negative psychological behaviours – loss of sense of direction and delusion. This psychological disorientation is driven by their efforts to resist, avenge and escape male chauvinism. But none of these girl characters is successful in her assertive quest in the end of the narratives.

The study reveals that the Nigerian Emecheta and the Zimbabwean Vera are in league to push the tenets of feminism to radical, "scandalous and murderous levels" (Nnolim, *Issues*… 217). Their ideas about feminism or feminist consciousness-raising are hinged on strong opposition to the enemy – man, who is the oppressor of the oppressed – girls and women. The rebellious independent actions of the girl characters focus on 'radical feminism' which claims that masculine values and patriarchy oppress and violate the rights of girls and women in society. In essence, they seem to suggest through the action of their female protagonists that there is no unity between the oppressor, (man) and the victim, (girl-child). This is seen in their quest to overthrow patriarchy through a violent revolution spurred by consciousness-raising, female

bonding and individual quest for emancipation. For Emecheta and Vera, radical feminism means breaking societal norms and customs. In Emecheta's *The Bride price,* it starts with Aku-nna's self-assertion when she escapes with Chike, a slave (Osu) and marries him in breach of the Ibuza age-old tradition. In Vera's *Under the Tongue*, Zhizha's mother (Runyararo) reacts by killing her husband to revenge her daughter's rape.

The narratives in the novels of Farah and Asika are told against the background of womanist preoccupation. Farah and Asika who are male novelists support the fact that girls experience a great deal of oppression in society, but reject the idea of violent revolution against the oppressors. They both adopt African womanism as an offshoot of feminism which is accommodationist in nature to resolve the tension and conflicts between the oppressors (men) and the oppressed (girls) in their novels. Farah and Asika in depicting female experiences through the lens of African womanism stress the fact that men are important in a girl's life, and good relations are very important for the survival of the girl-child in society, but also suggest that the freedom and independence of the girl-child must be maintained outside these relationships. This submission has presented Farah and Asika as promoters of complementarity ideology which is seen in their attempts to marry patriarchy and womanism. In Farah's *From a Crooked Rib*, Ebla ends up forgiving and accepting her oppressor (Awill). Ebla's manner of becoming independent through questionable behaviour that ends in pregnancy gives cause for worry over Farah's sense of morality. Indeed, Ebla's actions of marrying two husbands and committing adultery flout Somalia Islamic religious mores and give way to radicalism. At the end of the novel, Farah has betrayed an extremist stance that stuns the readers when Ebla and Awill adopt the womanist and accommodationist stance of negotiation and complementarity in their relationship. Also in *Tamara,* Asika takes a womanist and accommodationist stance when the girl protagonist

(Tamara) forgives her father and expresses the need for negotiation and reconciliation in her letter.

Both the female and male novelists in this study have encouraged, empowered and equipped their girl protagonists through female bonding which is a characteristic feature of African feminism. In *Under the Tongue*, Zhizha is comforted by her grandmother as a trauma survivor while her mother revenges her rape by killing the perpetrator (her father). In *The Bride Price*, female bonding is seen in the radical collective actions girls take to protect themselves from the obnoxious custom of 'isi nmo'. In *From a Crooked Rib*, Farah has depicted female bonding through the Widow and Asha whose advice encourages Ebla in her struggle against patriarchal oppression and subjugation. Asika's *Tamara* has also depicted female bonding through the emotional succor given to the protagonist, Tamara by her mother.

This research has revealed the degrees to which the female characters in the narratives have been overwhelmed by their violent childhood experiences. Emecheta and Vera present heroines whose traumatic experiences lead to neurosis; while the girl protagonists created by Farah and Asika experience depression by actively repressing their quest for liberation, feminist consciousness and past traumatic experiences to embrace negotiation through the womanist and accommodationist stance. In essence, their protagonists are not totally overwhelmed by their traumatic experiences.

The severe mental conditions Emecheta and Vera have depicted in their novels point to the fact that, only a female writer who has experienced gender-based violence is in a better position to understand the gravity of such patriarchal oppression and subjugation on the female gender. In other words, Farah and Asika have not been able to create female characters that are mentally distorted because they do not fall into the category of the oppressed. This explains why their

female characters are pushed by moral instincts to reflect on the need for negotiation by trying to reconcile with their oppressors. One thing is clear in all the selected novels explored in this study – the experiences of the girl characters complicate their lives by increasing a feeling of fragmentation in their psyche.

Generally, all the selected novels centre on gynocentrism because they explore the feminine psyche through violent childhood experiences. The girl protagonists' disillusionment and futility of individual struggles are captured through repression (active repression/ dissociation) and resistance of oppressive territories of power. These female protagonists have made sacrifices to fight against gender-based violence in different ways. They have deliberately repressed their emotions (love, hatred, anger, past experiences) in order to resist violence. Aku-nna challenges Ibuza traditional custom by rejecting her oppressor, (Okoboshi), Ebla represses her hatred for Awill by accommodating him as her husband, and Tamara represses her hatred for her father by writing a letter of apology to him. In Zhizha's situation, there is no repression because she is totally overwhelmed by her traumatic sexual experience.

Both the selected male and female writers are able to explore varied thematic issues that border on gender-based violence. Emecheta and Vera have explored varied thematic factors such as sexual abuse, early marriage and other traditional practices that promote discrimination and inequality of both sexes. Farah and Asika have also echoed female oppression through domestic violence, forced marriage, sexual abuse and trafficking. Following the above views, this research has succeeded in unifying the experiences of the female gender through gender-based violence. The research has discovered that violence causes physical injury, emotional or psychological trauma which oftentimes leaves the victims vulnerable or disillusioned.

Considering the selected novelists' dexterous representation of the physical and psychological consequences of violence on the girl characters, it is clear that a victim of gender-based violence vents her frustrations on others, thereby transmitting and intensifying the negative experiences to people around her. Victims, on the other hand, may accept violence as an alternative means of resolving their problems or may be totally overwhelmed by their traumatic experiences leading to multiple personality disorder. It is in these ways that violence is reproduced and perpetuated in the society. In Vera's *Under the Tongue*, Zhizha becomes so psychologically depressed that she loses the power of speech and becomes neurotic. Aku-nna in Emecheta's *The Bride Price* is also affected by neurosis and dies during childbirth as a result of harmful traditional practices and bride price conflict that cause fear and anxiety. Tamara in Asika's *Tamara* has terminal health issues (cancer and kidney problem) which lead to post-traumatic stress. Ebla in Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* married two men at the same time which is against the Islamic religion and Somalia's cultural traditions.

In this study, it is pertinent to add that the severity of traumatic childhood experiences is stressed on the fact that trauma survivors are usually overwhelmed by traumatic events that change their lives forever. Girl characters in the selected novels of the female writers are seen as female schizophrenic characters through the act of dissociation, while those in the male-authored novels actively repress their experiences after attempting to reject oppressive, reductive territorialities of power through self-assertions in order to pursue their dreams. In essence, the girl characters in the selected male-authored novels are affected by obsessional neuroses, while those in the selected female-authored novels are hysterical. Significantly, the female novelists' heroines are affected by psychosis, a severe mental disorder caused by a loss of contact with reality. This

discovery is attributed to gender identity which makes the female novelists radical and passionate, impatient of any restraint by male chauvinism.

CONCLUSION

The violation of the rights of the girl child is a serious problem which has been subjected to international and literary discourse. Emecheta, Vera, Farah and Asika, in their fictional creations have exposed the complexity of oppressive experiences that violate the rights of the girl-child. In essence, these novelists are human rights advocates who are mainly concerned with the intellectual fight against the oppression of the girl child and the violation of her rights.

In their intellectual approaches, the selected novelists have captured different violent experiences by exploring feminism from the perspectives of girls in different African cultural milieux. They have also succeeded in exposing and challenging traditional cultures or patriarchal structures that marginalize, stereotype, discriminate and debase the female gender. Through their girl characters, they have advocated for a revolutionary reordering of the society that would allow girls to actualize their dreams and develop physically, emotionally and psychologically.

Significantly, the female writers' novels reveal feminist ideologies which are different from the male writers. The female authors are more radical in depicting their protagonists' revolt against male chauvinism, while the male authors remarkably adopt complementarity and negotiation as a way of achieving peace between the male and female genders. Again, girl characters in the female-authored novels are not able to transcend inhibiting patriarchal limitations on them. They are totally overwhelmed by their violent experiences to the extent that they lose touch with reality. The girl characters in the male-authored novels on their part are not totally overwhelmed by their violent experiences, but are compelled by tradition to negotiate spaces with their

oppressors. By this, it is important to note that girls are still being oppressed and subjugated under patriarchal structures that offer them limited hope of freedom despite experiencing violence.

In fact, in depicting violence, all the selected authors for this research have created room for African feminism and female experiences to be explored in their fictional texts. By doing so, they have effectively condemned the male stereotyping images of girls as voiceless, docile, vulnerable, dependent and helpless. Generally, their novels challenge the oppression of the female gender in different cultural milieux. Thus, the novelists have made a landmark achievement through the assertive language of their characters in rejecting any form of human rights violation that denigrates or debases the girl child. They have also collectively criticized repressive and oppressive patriarchal social order and the violation of the girl-child's rights. In essence, through their documentation of violent experiences against the girl-child, they are advocating for positive change that would recognize and respect the rights of the girl-child in the society.

In summary, this research submits that the girl-child should be given opportunities to explore her basic human rights like her male counterpart such as access to education, freedom to participate actively in society, freedom from traditional stereotyping and sexual molestation, freedom of choice in marriage and rights to property inheritance. The above views are the messages the selected novelists have succeeded in communicating in their artistic creations. Thus, the focus of Emecheta, Vera, Farah and Asika in their novels is centered on female consciousness and self-assertion as propellants for female emancipation and relevance in every cultural milieu.

In conclusion, Emecheta, Vera, Farah and Asika have employed the various aspects of style such as plot, language (imagery, symbolism, irony, motifs) setting and narrative technique to explore their female protagonists' quest for self-actualisation towards the liberation of themselves in societies. Through these stylistic devices, the selected African novelists have been able to plausibly expore various forms of gender-based violence against the heroines and their journey to achieve self-emancipation. Thus, the focus of Emecheta, Vera, Farah and Asika in *The Bride Price*, *Under the Tongue*, *From a Crooked Rib* and *Tamara* is to expose different forms of gender-based violence that impinge on the growth , physical and psychological well-being of the girl-child in different African Contexts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has strived to investigate different forms and causes of violence against the girl-child in the study done in five chapters. This research is therefore inclined to give recommendations on how to curb or possibly end gender-based violence against the girl-child. Drawing from the experiences in this study, the most effective ways to combat gender-based violence against the girl-child are through:

- Education and consciousness raising, that is, creating awareness on the various forms of violence against the girl-child and their major consequences to her overall development.
- Challenging and exposing any act of violence both in private and public places.This involves the act of speaking out about any act of violence by the victims, relatives or observers.
- Listing to the victims' experiences with empathy in order to respond to their need for protection.

- Providing adequate measures that will offer security to girls at home, school or public places. This is achieved by not exposing girls to environments or places that will bring them close to their oppressors.
- Reducing the rate of poverty to dissuade girls from being exposed to situations that will give their oppressors options to exploit them.
- Training more specialists on gender-based violence that will help to unravel the cases of rape or other forms of violence in a community through constant monitoring and mentoring.
- Engaging responsible community members, both youths and elders in combating violence. This entails placing them on monthly allowances to ensure they discharge their duties effectively.
- Encouraging youths, boys and girls through sponsorship at home and school to reject and fight child marriage which exposes girls to many negative consequences.
- Challenging cultural anachronisms (stereotyping, inequality, dowry-related violence, rape culture, forced marriage, female circumcism) that militate against girls' physical, emotional and psychological growth.

The above recommendations are very important in combating gender-based violence against girl-children in different African cultural milieu. On a general note, the researcher is of the opinion that the citizens and government should play essential role in fighting and curbing the incidences of gender-based violence which violate the rights of girls. The citizens are urged to be patriotic in combating violence by assisting law enforcement agencies in arresting and prosecuting offenders who violate human rights. The government is also encouraged to create strategies and special agencies that engage in human rights education, constant exposure and reorientation of

the staff of the law enforcement agencies. The government is further advised to give severe punishnment to human rights violators irrespective of their social positions. This research further suggests that victims of violence should be offered necessary protection and support that will guarantee their liberty and happiness without stereotype. The above recommendations are the primary nexuses of this research on violence and the girl-child.

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