

**LITERARY REFLECTIONS OF AFRICAN WOMEN'S QUEST FOR
SOCIO-ECONOMIC PARITY IN
SELECTED AFRICAN WOMEN-AUTHORED TEXTS.**



HEZIWELL MHUNDURU

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SUPERVISOR: DR KUDZAYI NGARA

CO-SUPERVISOR: DR RODWELL MAKOMBE

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KEYWORDS

Patriarchy

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STIWANISM

Socio-Economic Parity

Transformation

Post-colonial resistance

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Non-confrontational resistance

Stereotyping

Acculturation

Complementarity

ABSTRACT

Heziwell Mhunduru – MA dissertation, Department of Humanities, University of The Free State.

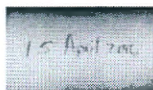
The original impulse for this thesis has arisen from observations that extant literature seems to suggest that African women have been passive recipients of whatever was handed down to them by the patriarchal system. It has also been put across that African women only voiced feminist concerns following after their western counterparts, notions that I do not agree with. In this dissertation I trace African women's quest for socio-economic parity from the time before Africa had any contact with the Western world. This is done by looking at the texts *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) by Buchi Emecheta, *Nervous Conditions* (1988) by Tsitsi Dangarembga and *The Uncertainty of Hope* (2006) by Valerie Tagwira. As the thesis develops from pre-colonial to post-colonial times, the voice of the African woman is traced. The analogy between patriarchy and colonialism is made, stemming from Bill Ashcroft's *Post-colonial Transformation* (2001) theory which is then factored into the STIWANIST theory which is the main theoretical framework for this mini-thesis. Both frameworks are used and their point of overlap which is non-confrontational resistance is highlighted as the texts are read. The socio-economic and socio-cultural clutches of patriarchy are highlighted in each chapter and it becomes apparent how patriarchy changes style in its quest to keep the woman oppressed. Feminist resistance and apparent subversion of the patriarchal system in all texts are unearthed in a manner that reveals that subtle resistance is the most effective type. A reading of the selected texts using the two frameworks gives hope to the African women's quest for socio-economic parity. Though not yet achieved, the possibility is closer than it was before. Studies of this nature should be pursued to further equip communities with ideas to facilitate the movement towards socio-economic parity.

DECLARATION

I declare that **Literary Reflections of African Women's Quest for Socio-economic Parity in Selected African Women-authored Texts** is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Heziwell Mhunduru

Date:



Signed:.....



DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, a worthy woman who would have wanted to see its conclusion but was transferred to a better world before that could happen:

Eunica Muchanyara Mhunduru (nee Chigudugudze)

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I wish to appreciate Dr Kudzayi Ngara who tirelessly took me through the grill and drill by putting this work through an academic crucible. Dr Makombe and Dr F. Mkwesha, I acknowledge your invaluable input. Professor Helene Strauss, your initial comments gave me the necessary impetus.

My wife Monica, my sons Yanano, Kudzaishe-Vigilance and Zoe-Eternity – you are a formidable team. I salute you.

Above all, I thank God Almighty for this open door and for His wisdom and guidance.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 RATIONALE

1.1.1 Background of the study

The majority of writings and discourse on African women fail to acknowledge the reality informed by the multidimensional nature of African women in terms of both their experiences and the articulation of their goals. Ige (2011:3) postulates that writings on African women tend to portray African women as confused, powerless and unable to determine for themselves both the changes needed in their lives and the means to construct them. African female characters are largely projected as subservient and inferior to men, as exemplified by the relationship between Okonkwo and his wives in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958). In the same vein, moral laxities like prostitution, are almost always associated with women as reflected in Jagua Nana of Cyprian Ekwensi's *Jagua Nana* (1961), Simi of Wole Soyinka's *The Interpreters* (1972) and Wanja of Ngugi wa Thiongo's *Petals of Blood* (1978). This portrayal of African women in fictional texts has led to analyses that have concluded that African women have always accepted this chiselled out inferior role without complaint, resistance and murmuring. It is this notion, as will be exhaustively discussed later, that this thesis challenges. The main targets of this study are patriarchal pockets of the African community that still display and hold on to the vestiges of patriarchy and seek to perpetuate its existence. These are represented here by the Zimbabwean and Nigerian communities where the primary texts are set.

Africa's hitherto marginalised position in the global context has often blurred the contributions of African women to many discourses in the global women's movement. However, the terrain is changing as there is a proliferation of feminist writers throughout Africa who are challenging the aforementioned stereotypical gender roles and portrayals in literature as posited in extant literature. This study will explore literary reflections of STIWANISM, Social Transformation Including Women in Africa, one of the offshoots of African Feminism, in these three African women-authored texts: *The Joys of Motherhood* by Buchi Emecheta (1979), *Nervous Conditions* by Tsitsi Dangarembga (1988) and *The Uncertainty of Hope* by Valerie Tagwira (2006). The texts will be read in order to explore and expound this hitherto little explored subfield of African Feminism that will be used to examine fictional representations of African women's quest for socio-economic parity. The

texts have been selected because they show in varying degrees, how women, juxtaposed to men, negotiate their survival of different levels of socio-economic and socio-political crises peculiar to their times. The texts are set at different times of African development and they will be analysed in their chronological order. This will be done because collectively, the texts show progression towards socio-economic parity albeit at differing paces. This is indicative of the inter-generational aspect of African women's quest for socio-economic parity.

The fact that the African women's quest for socio-economic parity spans generations, emanating from before their contact with the Western world, seems to have eluded some analysts who aver that this quest only started as a result of the feminist upheaval in the western countries. Iwuchukwu, in her paper on gender equality for sustainable development, posits that "the movement towards gender equality therefore emanated from the Western world ..." (Iwuchukwu, 2013:80). This cements the notion that African women have been passive recipients of patriarchal oppression from time immemorial to the time when they were rescued by their western counterparts. It is this contention that this study challenges.

This study anticipates proving that the African women's quest for parity has been alive way before the link with the western world. In similar fashion to Iwuchukwu mentioned above, Anderson seems to wholly credit the west for the attitude change in terms of gender. He states that "gender attitudes have changed significantly in Africa as a result of contact with the west" (Anderson, 2010:2). This therefore implies the same, namely that Africans became more aware of the gender disparity after their contact with the West, an issue at variance with this study which propounds that the fight for socio-economic parity has been ongoing amongst African women for quite a long time. Wisker (2000) contends that:

it is the woman who always needs to be constructed because on this continent the man is taken as the norm. We must therefore seek to examine the woman especially in terms of the psychological consequences of these hegemonic patterns, but not with the aim of vilifying African men or the colonizers. This is because for the women in particular, silencing has been the bane of their lives (2000:3).

Wisker here, is counter the vilification of African men and the colonizers and this resonates well with both STIWANISM and Ashcroft's notion of transformative resistance. However, she still perpetuates the notion that African women have always been silent recipients of the

oppression meted to them by patriarchy. In her view, African women's silence has been like a curse or spell cast over them yet the contention of this study is that African women have always resisted the hegemony of patriarchy and the resistance has been covert and progressively successful.

In view of the above, this dissertation seeks to establish the various ways in which African women, in their quest for socio-economic parity, have been involved in transformative initiatives in the African societies depicted in the selected texts. In their quest for socio-economic parity, African women have, largely in subtle ways, employed various forms of resistance to socio-economic oppression meted out to them through patriarchy largely in subtle ways. The three texts under study reflect in them that status quo of the position of African women as well but they go further to demonstrate how African women's long history of gendered and lived consciousness has put them on a mission to achieve socio-economic parity. This will further cement the fact that the quest for socio-economic parity is not a new phenomenon among African women, neither is it a consciousness that was awakened by Western women's movements but has been in existence amongst African women even before the advent of colonialism. These three texts also throw light on each other thereby illuminating certain areas of cohesion and commonality as well as noteworthy differences and this will be reflected in the subsequent chapters.

1.1.2 Definition of terms

A few terms pertinent to this study need definition. Patriarchy is defined as social organisation marked by the supremacy of the father in the clan or family, the legal dependence of wives and children, and the reckoning of descent and inheritance in the male line. Broadly it refers to control by men of a disproportionately large share of power. Walter defines it as "a society in which the oldest male is the leader of the family, or a society controlled by men in which they use their power to their own advantage" (Walter, 2008:1042). Emenyou (2000) resonates with this and further states that "patriarchy imposes male superiority on womankind and allows all forms of sexual, economic, political and cultural domination of women and girls" (Emenyou, 2000:28). Patriarchy deals mainly with masculinity and femininity. It is responsible for some of these binaries where the better is always the male and the weaker the female: dominating vs submissive; public domain vs

domestic realm; provider/protector vs caretaker/mother; transgress/subvert/defy vs succumb/submit/conform.

A look at various literary discourses will reveal how traditional gender roles in various institutions have been ascribed to the two genders in an almost uniform manner to attest to the power of socialisation that transcends geographic, cultural or religious boundaries. In the family institution, the man is always considered as the head and the woman as the supporter. This is also reflected in the religious set up where the head is usually male and the workers are usually female. Though there is a move to redress this, in most government institutions the political leaders are males and their secretaries are female and the same obtains in private companies where the C.E.O. is usually male with a female secretary. In the military, the generals and lieutenants are usually men and their nurses who take care of the casualties are usually female.

“Socio-economic parity” is best defined by subdividing the phrase. “Socio-economic” is related to the differences between groups of people caused mainly by their financial situation. This then entails that anything “socio-economic” is something heavily linked with society and how society ranks people according to their financial status. Socio-economic status is commonly conceptualized as the social standing or class of an individual or group. It is often measured as a combination of education, income and occupation. Examinations of socio-economic status often reveal disparities in access to resources, plus issues related to privilege, power and control. Mifflin (2005) defines socio-economic status as an individual’s or a group’s position within a hierarchical social structure. He goes on to say that socio-economic status depends on a combination of variables, including occupation, education, income, wealth, and place of residence.

“Parity” denotes the quality or state of being equal or equivalent (Merriam-Webster, 2014). The word has to do with uniformity, equivalence and similarity. The phrase “socio-economic parity” describes a society where there is equality across the gender divide. Such equality accords women and men equal access to societal, national and international resources, opportunities and privileges. In the context of this document, it describes a situation where women and men are on par with each other and are at the same level in every sphere of human endeavour, be it academic, religious, social, economic or political.

1.1.3 Research questions / aims

This research project aims, among other things, to explore the impact of STIWANISM as a socio-economic theory as reflected by the selected African women writers. This will prove its viability as a socio-economic theoretical framework that critics can use to read texts. Nfah-Abbenyi (1997:7) notes the consensus among literary critics that African women writers offer more dynamic representations of women than the image of subordination often presented by their male counterparts.

In this research I endeavour to establish the extent to which the selected African women writers' texts portray their characters and mould their themes to reflect a different African woman who can weather the dictates and effects of patriarchy and prove her mettle in socio-economic development. The concept of socio-economic parity and what it means in selected African cultures, as reflected in the texts, will be investigated. Its attainability will be measured against the successes and failures scored by the characters within the selected texts. Do the selected African female-authored texts show movement towards socio-economic parity and the inclusion of women in social transformation?

African women's roles are despised and their efforts reduced and this amounts to what I will call 'minimization' of African women. I will evaluate how the minimization of African women is manifested in the texts by looking at the depiction of women's duties at home and in society, outlining gender discrimination and exploring how the protagonists in the three texts succeed or fail in dealing with their unique situations. This is influenced by the observation that the protagonists in these texts, in spite of their acknowledged differences in age, geographic setting and time frames, suffer from similar problems but their responses to the stimuli differ and yield varying results as will be elaborated in the subsequent chapters. Nfah-Abbenyi (1997:151) observes that the characters that choose to restrict themselves to specific gender(ed) roles are shown to live very limiting, sometimes tragic lives while those who simultaneously juggle the multiple and sometimes contradictory roles that are conferred on them are shown to live self-determining lives. It is the aim of this research to explore the effects of the portrayal of women characters in these three texts since some are depicted not in stereotypical subservient, unchanging roles that are deliberately limiting but come alive as speaking subjects and agents for change (Nfah-Abbenyi, 1997:151). Adaku in *The Joys of*

Motherhood, Lucia in *Nervous Conditions* and Faith in *The Uncertainty of Hope*, immediately come to mind.

The study also seeks to investigate the socio-economic processes and conditions reflected in the texts that have given rise to gender disparity and hence the African women's subsequent vulnerability and how the women undertake sustainable livelihood in spite of these oppressive conditions. In the same vein, it seeks to establish how gender affects the livelihood strategies of African women represented by the women in the texts under study. In pursuit of this, this project undertakes to read the selected texts using STIWANISM, a conceptual approach whose tenets are coherent with urban livelihood studies as well as feminist and gender development perspectives. This will be amply illustrated in the chosen texts.

Through an analysis of patriarchy and its apparent collusion with colonialism as reflected in the texts, I aim to demonstrate that certain local cultural histories, specific socio-economic policies and current political and economic restructuring issues have contributed to the rise of gender disparity. In the same vein, I also seek to analyze the factors portrayed in the texts that threaten the livelihood strategies of African women in their different socio-economic statuses and the extent to which they are able to subvert some of these factors. Information concerning employment options, housing, health, financial accumulation, the social processes and living conditions of this group of people will be sought in the selected texts with a special emphasis on human agency, sustainability, and resilience.

These aims will guide this research as it seeks to examine the linkages between gender, livelihoods, and socio-economic structures and how they promote and/or discourage socio-economic parity between men and women as reflected in the selected texts. Such readings help us realise the potential that the arts have in reshaping individual and national consciousnesses and fostering a sense of courage to face the myriad crises of the 21st century, either at individual, societal or national level (Mlambo, 2015:1).

As earlier stated, the problem is that available literature seems to represent women in African societies as silent victims of patriarchal oppression yet they have always resisted oppression. "Existing scholarship on *The Joys of Motherhood*, rather than serving as an avenue through which to assess the conditions of African women and to interrogate the validity of its claims,

has become, for the most part, a framework for reiterating old stereotypes about Africa and its women and for oversimplifying an otherwise complex relationship” (Nnoromele, 2002:178). Does academy today have a clearer picture of the conditions of African women than it had a few decades ago? This view by extant literature, as highlighted by Nnoromele above, has presented African women as people without agency, hence the socio-economic disparity between men and women. This raises pertinent research questions. How do African societies in these selected texts promote and enforce the cultural and economic oppression of women? Discourse that pursues answers to this question will reveal the patriarchal tools used to perpetuate the socio-economic disparity between the genders.

What strategies do women in the selected texts adopt to resist and subvert cultural and economic oppression? It will be shown that the women in the selected texts employ different strategies to mitigate oppression caused by the dictates of patriarchy.

To what extent are the resistance strategies adopted by African women in the selected texts effective and sustainable? As answers to this question are sought, it will be established whether there is any movement towards socio-economic parity between the genders.

The ensuing analyses of the texts using STIWANISM and Ashcroft’s theories of resistance will reveal that the reason why women have survived patriarchal oppression is because they have always been involved in some form of resistance strategies. During the analyses, I will trace the development of women’s quest for socio-economic parity alongside their resistance to economic oppression as depicted in the developments in the texts. I will also seek to establish how patriarchy has fared in its attempt to keep women down and whether it has changed strategies over the years.

1.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to give nuance to my main theoretical framework, STIWANISM, an offshoot of Feminism, it is imperative that I discuss salient issues of Feminism in general. Feminist concerns have been in existence in Africa from time immemorial but the term “feminism” only came into existence in the 18th century and has acquired numerous definitions depending on the perceptions of many women and analysts. Ige (2011:4) posits that Feminism as a theory seeks two long term goals, namely “the freedom from oppression for women which

involves not only equity, but also the right of women to freedom of choice, and the power to control our own lives within and outside the home. Having control of our own bodies is essential to ensure a sense of dignity and autonomy for every woman.” The second goal of Feminism is the removal of all forms of inequity and oppression through the creation of a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally. This means the involvement in liberation struggles, in plans of development, and in local and global struggle for change.

O'Donnell (1992:172) defines a Feminist as someone who holds that women suffer discrimination because of their sex and have specific needs which remain negated and unsatisfied and the satisfaction would require radical change or revolution in the social, economic and political order. Rice and Waugh (2001:143) assert that Feminism is rooted in the political discourse of modernity, liberty, rights and rationality. Barrow and Millburn (1990:128) contend that Feminism is a label for a commitment or movement to achieve equality for women, whereas J.A. Cuddon (1991:338) defines it as an attempt to describe and interpret (or reinterpret) women's experiences as depicted in various kinds of literature. From a sociological perspective, Maggie Humm (1992:1) avers that the word Feminism can stand for a belief in sexual equality combined with a commitment to transform society. It is generally understood and accepted that there is no sweeping definition of the term.

Feminism as a theory, was viewed by some African women analysts as a Western import which came to Africa with Western education (Lunga, 2010:28). In view of this, some African women have chosen to write from an Afro-centred theoretical framework and this then has been labelled African Feminism (Ogunyemi, 1996:111). A cursory view of African Feminism becomes imperative. African Feminism is not synonymous with female aggression, women's struggle to be like a man (Ezeigbo in Emenyonu, 2000:44). It is not exclusive, negativistic, violent, militant nor confrontational. It should “not be associated with aggression or unimaginable excesses in women and girls” (Lunga, 2010:29). In reference to the emergence of African Feminism, Jones (1987:2) asserts that the African woman writer, as exemplified by the three under study, has decided that she too has a duty to correct misconceptions about women and that she must give the genuine woman's perspective on the issue. Okome (1999:57) states that African women, like any other group, are able to articulate their needs, evaluate the alternative courses of action and mobilise for collective action where

necessary. This has witnessed the mushrooming of variants of Feminism from the African continent all emphasising the aspect of an African context. Mekgwe avers that the sprouting of the diverse theoretical models of African origin is a response to the anomalies exhibited by mainstream Feminism, particularly its inability to address the cultural specificities out of which these models are theorised (Mekgwe, 2010:189). Ogunyemi recoils from being associated with the ideology of Feminism as developed in Europe while Emecheta does not see herself as a feminist in the radical American sense and in the same vein, Nwapa denies that she is feminist but rather opts to be called a “womanist” (Maduka, 2009:6).

From African Feminism derive other theoretical frameworks such as Motherism, Womanism and STIWANISM, the framework through which the selected texts will be read. A cursory view of these is imperative before a thorough discussion and justification of why STIWANISM is made. According to Maduka, Acholonu, the proponent of Motherism, dismisses the terms “patriarchy” and “matriarchy” which she deems Eurocentric and in their places opts for patrifocality and matrifocality since in her view, men and women are complementary opposites, hence no gender dominates the totality of the social life of people (Maduka 2009:12).

In my view, one of the major weaknesses of Acholonu’s approach is that it accords men dominance in socio-political spheres and relegates women to spiritual and metaphysical segments of life. It does so in a pseudo-acceptance of the complementary being of the gender roles which on its own rigidly confines the different genders to specific social roles. We have a catalogue of African women who have indeed excelled in the socio-political spheres, hence the contention. Rhoda Asiki Ige (2011) concurs with this when she states that Africa’s historical heritage has an endless galaxy of African women who shaped the histories of their communities (Ige, 2011:6). Maduka, precisely states that though the theory is accurately handled by Acholonu, it is still diffuse and needs some refinements (Maduka, 2009: 12).

Two people have laid claim to the birth of the modern use of the term Womanism. The Nigerian, Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi and the African-American, Alice Walker are the two proponents of Womanism. Overall, Ogunyemi’s Womanism dwells on the duels of non-incorporation of African women’s experience locally, nationally, and globally, stressing that

it should incorporate racial, cultural, national, economic, and political considerations. In a slightly different contribution, Walker's stress is on the peculiarities of the African-American woman in contrast to the African woman's plight (Alkali et al, 2013:239). Ogunyemi categorically states that Womanism is black centred; it is accommodationist. It believes in the freedom and independence of women but, unlike radical feminism, it wants meaningful union between black women and black men and black children and will see to it that men begin to change from their sexist stand (Maduka, 2009: 11). This view point introduces the question of Africanness. It is the contention of this study that Blackness is not synonymous to Africanness. In view of the discussion of the two types of Womanism above, they are both deemed unfit to represent the concerns of African women as their arguments border on segregation of the non Black African women who are toiling under patriarchy in equal measures.

It is this understanding of Feminism that I will work with in this study as it encompasses the majority of issues at stake in the three texts and they will be made clearer as the texts are going to be read through STIWANISM.

STIWANISM was posited by Morala Ogundipe-Leslie in 1994. It has been singled out because of its all-inclusive nature as will be discussed later. Reading the texts through the lens of STIWANISM, it is hoped, will expose the African women's quest for socio-economic parity as reflected in the texts. From the onset, STIWANISM acknowledges the existence and power of acculturation, a prominent feature in the three texts under scrutiny, which is here defined as a "process of social change caused by the interaction of significantly diverse cultures" (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994:220). This takes cognizance of a child's conditioning to the patterns of a particular society. Acculturation is further explained as the adoption of principles, norms and values that can be done by an individual or a group (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994:220). In view of this, the three texts reveal that an African child, or any child for that matter, is groomed from infancy such that its values, morals, identity and destiny are determined by that particular society. The setting of the three texts studied here, which is the African context, here represented by the Nigerian Igbo society and the Zimbabwean Shona society, is largely patriarchal hence the mindset of the child (regardless of gender) becomes patriarchal as well. This process breeds persons who will become the cultural repositories that

will seek to maintain and perpetuate these set beliefs and values. STIWANISM however, challenges patriarchy and advocates parity between genders that will make them complementary as opposed to one gender supplementing the other as dictated by patriarchy. STIWANISM concedes the unavailability of acculturation but proposes a permissive and liberating approach that leaves African men and women acculturated in such a manner as to enable them to release their potential in every area of human endeavour, especially socio-economically, an area that has largely been the preserve of men. This is a clear message embedded in the three texts under study.

In fulfilment and demonstration of the aspect of African context embedded within it, STIWANISM recognizes the diversity in Africa and hence does not generalize Africanness and for this reason does not limit it to colour, geographic setting or religion. In terms of colour, Morala states that “being ‘black’ is a political metaphor and importantly, skin colour is not a useful, necessary and sufficient way to taxonomise Africans” (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994:215). Ogundipe, the chief proponent of STIWANISM, says she was not socialised to describe herself physically in terms of colour. In terms of religion, STIWANISM acknowledges a Christian and Muslim Africa as well as Africa with indigenous religions (Olaniyan and Quayson, 2010:543). This ensures that STIWANISM assumes the desired all-inclusive nature.

Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) posits that women may differ about strategies and methods but they do not differ on the basic assumption that women are oppressed through patriarchy as women and also through colonialism as Africans considered inferior. From this, the socio-political aspect of STIWANISM emerges. It is evident that these three novels read through STIWANISM acknowledge the socio-economic disparity before Africa’s contact with the western world and at the same time bemoan the exacerbation of the same due to the effects of colonialism on Africa. Demographic data suggests that women outnumber men but are oppressed by men. In the same vein, Africans were numerically more than their colonisers but were also oppressed by them. This then fostered the double oppression of women since they suffered from the effects of colonialism directly and also indirectly through the oppression by men. Tambudzai and Maiguru in *Nervous Conditions*, Nnu Ego in *The Joys of Motherhood* and Onai in *The Uncertainty of Hope* are the apparent (but not the only) victims

of this oppression. The African patriarchal tendencies were compounded by the negative patriarchal propensity of the West that was transferred through colonialism.

STIWANISM does not consider the issue of Feminism as a foreign one since it acknowledges that indigenous feminisms always existed in Africa, though not documented, and these are the subject of current scholarly research. This is a clear indication that the African women's fight for socio-economic parity is not a new phenomenon to the African context but an age-old issue whose origin and form need to be discussed. This is accentuated by Davies in Olaniyan and Quayson (2007: 563), who states that there already existed in African societies, structures that gave women equality. *The Joys of Motherhood*, one of the three texts under study, will reveal that the colonial and immediate pre-colonial periods are not the only indices by which one evaluates traditional African societies as they demonstrates deep-rooted consciousness of feministic tendencies that will be explored later.

With this understanding of STIWANISM, the three primary texts will be interrogated to reveal reflections of these aspects of the theoretical framework and through this, question the effectiveness of literary discourses in the advocacy for socio-economic parity between men and women. A STIWANIST reading of the selected texts will not be limited to a mere examination of how male dominance and female subservience manifest themselves through the texts, as is the usual trend in feminist analysis, but it will reveal usually unheralded successes scored by women in the socio-economic arena as reflected in the texts. From a patriarchal perspective, men have been described as rational, strong, protective and decisive whereas women have been portrayed as emotional, irrational, weak, nurturing and submissive. This is how people have been socialised and as Chukwuma puts it, "women conditioning in Africa is the greatest barrier toward a fulfilment of self" (Chukwuma, 1994:ix).

This study, through a reading of the named texts, seeks to prove that there is no gender description that is fixed since it will be tantamount to stereotyping. People should, however, be judged as individuals and not according to their gender as it will be proven that there are women who can rise to any occasion and there are men who can stoop low. This study proposes a re-articulation of economic and political power, a major STIWANIST tenet that

will be analysed throughout the three selected texts in their different settings. Some authors have always inflated and abused the masculine powers and have defined women in terms that are convenient to the male species and this has left women with little or no financial and political power to define themselves. The STIWANIST reading of these texts will show how the inclusion of women in socio-economic development will be beneficial to all as it inches towards socio-economic parity. This study argues that STIWANISM is a socio-economic theory that can be used as a tool to analyse literary texts for a successful exposé of the socio-economic disparity between men and women with the hope of its redress.

The three African women writers, whose works are under scrutiny in this study, have demonstrated in these particular texts and in others they have written that they are indeed Feminists. Emecheta, a Nigerian author, has written over twenty novels. *Second Class Citizen* (1974) is one of them whose protagonist, Adah, is a young girl desperate for an education. She observes and is not satisfied with what her Igbo society offers her as a girl-child namely wifehood to an old man and honoured motherhood as the mother of many sons. For this reason, her life is spent in an attempt to manipulate her surroundings and society in order to subvert misogyny and the racism she encounters when she gets to Britain. Emecheta has also authored *The Bride Price* (1976) and *The Slave Girl* (1977), novels which raise serious Feminist concerns.

Dangarembga also wrote *The Book of Not* (2006), a sequel to *Nervous Conditions*, which perpetuates the Feminist issues in *Nervous Conditions*. In her play, *She No Longer Weeps* (1987), Dangarembga portrays African women who endure their womanhood as she lampoons the retrogressive forces that hinder women's emancipation from the clutches of patriarchy. She also reveals Zimbabwean women's steadfastness, resilience and stoicism in this patriarchal society. She has also directed the film *Everyone's Child* (1996) which deals with the plight of the girl child at the advent of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. She wrote the story behind *Neria* (1993), an epic Zimbabwean film that shows greed and the evils of the inheritance laws perpetuated by patriarchy.

Valerie Tagwira is a medical doctor who has written short stories which include *A Walk in the Night* (2009) and *Mainini Grace's Promises* (2008). In these short stories, she mainly

focuses on gender issues especially how Zimbabwean women grapple with socio-economic issues in the face of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The overarching tenet of STIWANISM is its non-confrontational stance. To buttress this, I will then factor in the aspect of Resistance, a strand of Bill Ashcroft's Post-colonial Transformation theory. Ashcroft (2001) champions overt or passive resistance which he says "demonstrates the fascinating capacity of ordinary people, living below the level of formal policy or active rebellion, to foment change in their cultural existence" (Ashcroft, 2001:21). Ashcroft's point is that the most effective if not enduring form of resistance is subtle and covert rather than overt and confrontational. I should make it clear from the onset that I am adapting Ashcroft's ideas on how colonialism functions to explain how patriarchy functions. As far as I see it, patriarchy and colonialism are bedfellows therefore Ashcroft's ideas on colonialism also apply to patriarchy. This is clearly evident in all the texts under study as will be exhaustively demonstrated in the chapters that follow.

Writing about resistance to colonialism, Ashcroft argues that the most effective forms of resistance were those that did not openly challenge the system. He does not in any way undermine militant forms of resistance but rather simply points out that subtle resistance is more sustainable especially when one is dealing with hegemonic systems such as patriarchy. This will be applied to the subtle ways in which women in the selected texts undermine patriarchal authority in order to carve a survival space for themselves. As will emerge in the analyses of the texts, the women who choose overt types of resistance achieve a measure of success though not as favourable as the success of those who choose the covert type.

One of the benefits of covert resistance is that it has a transformative effect that is visible on both sides of the binaries namely colonizer and colonized or male and female. "The attempt to understand how post-colonial cultures resisted the power of colonial domination in ways so subtle that they transformed both colonizer and colonized lies at the heart of post-colonial studies" (Ashcroft, 2001: 3). This becomes clearly evident in the texts under study thereby giving great hope of a paradigm shift in the perception of African communities when they view the genders. To cement his argument, Ashcroft further argues that "ultimately, the transformation of history stands as one of the most strategic and powerfully effective modes

of cultural resistance” (Ashcroft, 2001:15). It is this transformative effect that makes Ashcroft’s theories of resistance in his *Post-colonial Transformation* (2001) a plausible theoretical framework to augment the STIWANIST approach since STIWANISM heavily hinges on social transformation of the society at large. Jefferess (2008) concurs with Ashcroft when he says resistance should “transform social relations rather than simply be a reactive movement which either opposes or subverts colonial rule” (2008:14). It is this envisaged transformation that will be traced in the analysis of the texts under study to concretize the relevance and applicability of these two theoretical frameworks.

Subtle resistance is involved in the process by which colonial subjects take hold of any imperial technology and make it work for them (Ashcroft, 2001:24). One possible reading of this statement is that the supposed weaker side of the binary takes the tools of oppression to their advantage. Adaku (Nnaife’s second wife), in *The Joys of Motherhood*, turns the economic situation that could have stifled her to her advantage. She momentarily turns to prostitution and scores successes there then willingly deserts the trade to engage in entrepreneurial activities and gets transformed in the process. Tambu in *Nervous Conditions* is subjected to western education that has great potential to erode her tenacity but she uses that education to her advantage yet remains resolute in her resolve to maintain and perpetuate elements in her culture that are progressive and to discard the oppressive patriarchal traits. Tambu’s resistance to be changed can best be explained by Ashcroft’s assertion that:

the most fascinating feature of post-colonial societies is a ‘resistance’ that manifests itself as a refusal to be absorbed...[that] takes the array of influences exerted by the dominating power and altering them into tools for expressing a deeply held sense of identity and cultural being (Ashcroft, 2001:20).

He dubs it the most quotidian form of resistance in post-colonial societies. Shahjahan (2011) concurs with this view when he says that “historically, the colonized used colonial discourse theory as a tool to deconstruct colonial knowledge and create alternative readings of the self and colonial authority” (2011:276). He further asserts that “this form of resistance fosters a mutual interdependence between Self and Other rather than antagonism” (2011:276) and this is one of the main aims of STIWANISM hence the inclusion of the aspect of Resistance in

this study. This is clear evidence of the transformative nature of such resistance and it carves clefts for the previously disadvantaged by which they will be relevant in all spheres of social development. Commonplace though it may seem, its effectiveness, as reflected in the texts under study, can never be minimized. This type of transformative resistance “demonstrates the fascinating capacity of ordinary people, living below the level of formal policy or active rebellion, to foment change in their cultural existence” (Ashcroft, 2001:20).

Whereas in a colonial set up the ordinary people are the colonized, in the patriarchal societies represented in the three texts under study, the ordinary people are the African women who are engaged in a covert struggle to unshackle themselves from the clutches of patriarchal hegemony. Nnu Ego resists her husband Nnaife from their first encounter because of his unmanly physical appearance; Tambu resists her tyrannical uncle, Babamukuru, who at the same time is her benefactor, and Onai resists her husband Gari till his death. She even goes ahead to resist the ridiculous inheritance law that denies her of everything she has worked hard for. All these women score varying degrees of victory which gives credence to the effectiveness of passive resistance, a tool that African women have successfully used long before Africa’s contact with the Western world.

The forms of resistance that will be used in this study, as postulated by Ashcroft (2001), are subtle resistance, resistance to absorption, overt or confrontational resistance and discursive resistance. I will also discuss what I code-name kamikaze resistance, derived from the Second World War Japanese suicide pilots. This is a type of resistance where the subject knows he/she will be destroyed in the process hence there is no hope in this one.

1.3 LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE SELECTED TEXTS

The three texts under review have previously been studied through the lenses of various theoretical frameworks. STIWANISM as a theoretical framework has been discussed by many critics as well. It is acknowledged that these texts have been read through other theoretical perspectives and some of these views will be discussed here.

Nyanhongo (2011:2) discusses two of the selected texts, namely *The Joys of Motherhood* and *Nervous Conditions*, where she looks at images of African women in the light of gender

oppression and the possibility of empowerment. She posits that a novel such as Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* seeks to present a picture of motherhood in Africa that differs markedly from the idealized presentations of motherhood by certain male writers on this continent. Writers such as Leopold Senghor, who depicts African women as Mother Africa figures, perpetuates and reaffirms the subordinate roles of women because of the already compromised perception of women as seen from a patriarchal perspective, while the identities of many of the women in Ngugi Wa Thiongo's novels tend to be bound up with their roles as wives and mothers (Nyanhongo, 2011:2). I concur with this analysis as I will further compare the largely stoical Nnu Ego with her mother Ona, who dies entertaining the hope that her daughter will "have a life of her own" and will be allowed to "be a woman" (Emecheta, 1979:26). This utterance from a woman who lived before Africa's contact with the western world further buttresses the overarching contention of this study that African women have had Feminist concerns from time immemorial.

Colonial and patriarchal discourse would want us to see the traditional African woman as a downtrodden subservient being. Nnoromele (2002) argues that this is in sharp contrast to unheralded scholars such as Margaret Greene and Kaneme Okonjo, who present African women not as breeders, slaves, beasts of burden, or commodities to be sold, but as human beings living vibrant, fulfilling lives and playing essential roles in the political, social and economic lives of their communities (2002:181).

Nyanhongo further contends that *Nervous Conditions* and *The Joys of Motherhood* catalogue African women who battle with or succumb to the various forms of traditional oppression that hinder them from attaining personal empowerment, while many well-known African writers such as Ngugi and Senghor, do not explore these damaging aspects of tradition. Nyanhongo believes that Dangarembga and Emecheta explore women's attempts to achieve self-actualization in the changing societies they inhabit and this is a significant role in women's literature that explores new possibilities for women and women's writing (Nyanhongo, 2011:2).

In the same vein, *The Joys of Motherhood* has been analysed by many literary critics. Motherhood in African literature and culture is an integral component of Feminist analysis of

many texts authored by African women. Akujobi (2011:2) defines Motherhood as an automatic set of feelings and behaviour that is switched on by pregnancy and the birth of a baby. This definition limits Motherhood to being a physical experience yet Motherhood as seen through STIWANISM can also be experienced even by people who have not had biological children. In this study, Motherhood will not be limited to just the physical act of childbirth but the ethos of a nurturing phenomenon that is neither triggered by, nor confined to childbearing. Akujobi (2011) further states that no matter the skills, the desires and the talents of a woman, her primary function is that of motherhood (Akujobi, 2011:2). This contention can be applied to Nnu Ego as a character but it falls far short of the reality envisaged for the African woman desired by Ona in *The Joys of Motherhood*. Akujobi (2011:4) further states that Emecheta's novels deal with the portrayal of the African woman. She looks at how sexuality and the ability to bear children may at times be the only way by which femininity and womanhood are defined. Nnu Ego in *The Joys of Motherhood* and Adah in *Second Class Citizen* (1974) have to work and support their families because of the deficiencies of the perceived male bread winners and this is contrary to the patriarchal belief that men are the providers. This then shows this reversal of roles should also be factored in when the concept of Motherhood is considered.

The blame shift in terms of fertility in childbearing is one practice that is latently highlighted in *The Joys of Motherhood* where Nnu Ego had to change husbands for conception to take place. Andrade, (2009:100), concurs with this observation when she says that *The Joys of Motherhood* dialogizes *Efuru's* tragic flaw in Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* (1966) and shifts responsibility for conception onto the man. In existing literature, the lack of conception has largely been blamed on the woman but in *The Joys of Motherhood* and in *Efuru* (1966), both of the women eventually become pregnant after a long time. This observation is meant to balance the equation so that society does not rush to blame the woman for failed conception. This line of thought will be pursued further in Chapter One when the text will be analysed in greater detail.

Dangarembga is a renowned female, African writer who acknowledges that she has read African Literature especially Ngugi wa Thiongo and Achebe's works, and found them deficient, hence her drive to consciously set out to write a novel that would "address those

issues that she felt strongly about but which she found either missing or not fully reflected in most of those African texts that she read” (Zhuwarara, 2000:235).

Waugh (2011) seeks to establish Nietzschean Heroism in *Nervous Conditions* where she focuses on Nietzsche’s famous declaration “God is dead” and finds Babamukuru as the intersection of traditional patriarchal and colonial systems and values. Waugh (2011:86) deems Babamukuru as the last god that Tambu must confront before she is able to create values for herself and also the god that must figuratively “die” in Nietzsche’s philosophy. Whilst this approach makes plausible conclusions, when compared to STIWANISM, it is highly confrontational. This is at variance with STIWANISM which is inclusive and also with Ashcroft’s Resistance which is covert.

Mabura (2010) also compares Dangarembga with her contemporary Zimbabwean female author Yvonne Vera in her reading of the former’s *Nervous Conditions* and its sequel *The Book of Not* (2006) and the latter’s *The Stone of Virgins* (2004). In her analysis, she looks at the concepts of “refuge and prospect in the landscapes” in the novels. Mabura (2010:88) states that these works exhibit a de-silencing of women through landscape and a finding of womanist spaces of refuge in it. She further contends that these spaces are liberatory and enable women to perform a psychological, economical and even a bodily emancipation. This colludes with psychological liberation, one of the issues that will be explored as *Nervous Conditions* will be read through STIWANISM.

Rine (2011) seeks “Small Flowerings of Unhu” in *Nervous Conditions* as she endeavours to establish the survival of community in the text and its sequel *The Book of Not*. Her focus is on inter-racial and inter-cultural interactions and relationships and though there is some relevance to my study, there is a difference of focus.

Jefferson (1999) traces hybridity in a number of works authored by Zimbabweans both male and female including *Nervous Conditions*. The concept is a literary one and worthy the study but there is still a need to explore other aspects such as resistance and transformation to add scholarly value to the text as new analytical tools emerge. In the same vein, its thrust is mainly on Nyasha, which is appropriate in its own right but not so exhaustive as far as my study of the novel is concerned.

Latha (2009) in her M.A. thesis that includes a reading of *Nervous Conditions*, looks at various themes like injustice, women's subjection, cultural alienation, sexism and patriarchy and also rural women's drudgery. Traces of Feminism can be seen in the text but there is no specific expression of the need for women's socio-economic parity or any form of emancipation.

Tagwira's text, *The Uncertainty of Hope*, explores the increasingly tough lives for women in post-colonial Zimbabwe. The novel is a meticulous depiction of the survival of women at the pinnacle of the 2005 socio-political and socio-economic Zimbabwean catastrophe. Tagwira deals with a wide cross-section of Zimbabwean women such as Onai Moyo, a market woman, Katy Nguni, a vendor and black market foreign currency dealer, Ruva, an Ordinary Level candidate, Faith and Melody who are university students, and many others. Most of these women are to be credited for their efforts to define themselves outside and in defiance of cultural and societal definitions of respectable and obedient women. Tagwira's women are stalwarts and authors of their own narratives, a total departure from the previous status quo that saw male authors "writing the lives of women characters and voices that women could be writing themselves" (Attree, 2010: 68). Their grit is plausible especially given the 2005 economic meltdown of Zimbabwe which saw "black women from urban townships and rural areas participating in the economy as informal traders in a situation where informal trade had become 'formal' trade" (Vambe, 2008:76).

In her exploration of the concept "danger" in *The Uncertainty of Hope*, Chitando (2011:127) suggests that Tagwira's novel offers an empowering view of gender roles that enable the women to survive in situations that threaten their well-being. In spite of this, she still finds that negative stereotypes of women persist albeit the contributions different women have made in national development. A STIWANIST reading of this text is complimentary to Chitando's analysis that highlights "danger" and "urgency."

Using the Resilience Theory, Mlambo (2011) states that the novel explores and analyses the fictionalisation of coping strategies in crisis hit urban Zimbabwe and illustrates how literary texts can narrate resilience and inform us about critical concerns to handle change, adversity and uncertainty. Resilience Theory is plausible though it still leaves the women resilient but not included as is the intention of STIWANISM that will see African women openly acknowledged and enabled as meaningful contributors to socio-economic growth.

As far as I can see, the extant critical literature and research has not engaged with reflections of STIWANISM in these selected African women-authored texts hence the conviction that this dissertation will contribute to the state of knowledge in the field of Africa gender and women studies.

1.4 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In this study, the texts will be studied in their chronological order in order to build up a cumulative effect that will indicate the progression towards socio-economic parity between women and men. The first part of each chapter will be an analysis of the tools of oppression used by the particular patriarchal system in each text. There will also be an analogy of patriarchy and colonialism which focuses on how the two seek to make use of the binaries to achieve the common goal of oppressing their subjects. In each chapter there will be an analysis of the strategies used by African women to subvert and mitigate the retrogressive dictates of patriarchy and also an assessment of how effective the resistance strategies by the African women are. This will help to establish whether there has been movement towards socio-economic parity between the genders.

The chapters of this dissertation will be laid down as follows: Chapter One: **Culture and Resistance** will provide an in depth critique of *The Joys of Motherhood*. Its focal point is culture and how it perpetuates patriarchal tendencies that repress the socio-economic development of women especially with the aid of the institution of marriage whose form has been hewn to heavily advantage men. It will highlight the inherent societal tendency to groom a young girl “for the useful role she is expected to play in society...this role pertains mainly to marriage and child-bearing” (Oladele, 1984:2). This primary text will be analysed to clearly define the culturally-defined role of women by focusing on the protagonist, Nnu Ego. Her life ideology will then be juxtaposed with those of other women characters like her mother, Ona. This comparison will reveal some elements of resistance which will repudiate the fact that all women comply with the laid down dictates. Given the fact that it starts before the coming of the Whites to Africa, my analysis will show that the fight for socio-economic parity, a major tenet of STIWANISM, is not a new phenomenon but rather an ongoing process that started before it was institutionalized through academic study as a concept in sociological theory.

The second chapter, entitled **Beyond Tradition** will explore womanhood through an analysis of Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*. Given the background of the stipulated feminine roles and the fracturing of traditional boundaries as discussed in the previous chapters, this chapter exposes the gradual weakening of patriarchal tendencies as they get challenged by the female characters in the text. This will mainly be highlighted by contrasting the perceptions of Jeremiah, Babamukuru and Mai Tambu with those of Maiguru, Tambu and Nyasha especially given their differing social statuses. Supposed change agents such as western education and westernization in general will be explored vis-a-vis culture and modern expectations. The themes of sex, sexuality, individualism and individuality will be explored as the female characters will be analysed against the backdrop of the prevailing patriarchal dictates.

Routes: Stumbling Blocks to Socio-Economic Parity is a chapter that examines *The Uncertainty of Hope* in order to expose the extent to which women have moved towards the achievement of socio-economic parity with their male counterparts. The text is a catalogue of problems that bedevil African women and in the same vein, a clear demonstration that "African women, like any other group, are able to articulate their needs, evaluate the alternative courses of action, and mobilise for collective action where necessary" (Okome, 1999:11). The theme of resilience will be examined in light of Egeland, Carlson, & Sroufe, (2005:19), who define it as "the capacity for successful adaptation, positive functioning or competence ...despite high-risk, chronic stress, or following prolonged or severe trauma." In view of this, both male and female characters will be analysed and a clear statement made of how African women can weather any situation regardless of cultural dictates. The unfavourable socio-political situation in which the text is set and the vestiges of patriarchy will also be examined.

The last chapter, **Synthesis and Conclusion**, involves comparative readings of the three texts under study. I will use it to tie all the narrative and discursive threads together, as well as to reiterate some of the major points that will have emerged from the analyses of the texts.

2. CHAPTER ONE: Culture and Resistance

“...however much you love our daughter Nnu Ego
you allow her to have a life of her own..

Allow her to be a woman.” (Emecheta 1979:26)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Patriarchal societies have always moulded their norms and values in a way that has sought to disadvantage women by promoting socio-economic and socio-cultural oppression. However, there has always been a breed of women from each generation that has resisted this with varying degrees of success. The resistance mounted by these women has been either covert or overt. This will be demonstrated in this chapter as the text *The Joys of Motherhood* will be analysed.

Resistance is not a phenomenon peculiar to Africa; it is commonplace in most post-colonial communities. In India, Rigoberta Menchu’s resistance is more elusive and covert and it demonstrates the fine balance between resistance and transformation in revolutionary activity (Ashcroft, 2001:19). This then suggests that where there is resistance, it is a sign that transformation is overdue and as it persists, the desired transformation will inevitably be achieved. Through the analysis of the text *The Joys of Motherhood* in this study, we envisage the transformation from patriarchal tendencies to societies where people’s value is neither dependent on, nor determined by gender anymore but by whom they are as human beings.

Ashcroft (2001:20) further states that:

the most fascinating feature of post-colonial societies is a resistance that manifests itself as a refusal to be absorbed, a resistance which engages that which is resisted in a different way, taking the array of influences exerted by the domineering power, and altering them into tools for expressing a deeply held sense of identity and cultural being.

In the context of this dissertation, the domineering power here is patriarchy and the women do not want to be absorbed and cowed down by it. The women use covert strategies to demonstrate their refusal. This is a clear indication of the non-confrontational nature of this type of resistance which is one of the major tenets of STIWANISM hence the need to read the text using both frameworks. The women are not fighting to be turned into men but rather for the cultural anomaly introduced by the oppressive patriarchal system to be corrected so that we have a social transformation that indeed includes women in Africa. These two theoretical frameworks will be the major tool for the analysis of the target text in this chapter.

This chapter will delve deep into the compromised position of women in the Igbo community and this will be done through juxtaposing the protagonist, Nnu Ego, a woman submissive to the dictates of patriarchy and the co-wife, Adaku, who successfully transcends the rigid patriarchal boundaries (Nnoromele, 2002:184). Though Nnu Ego is portrayed bowing to patriarchal dictates especially when still in Iboza, she outgrows this in her second marriage to Nnaife. Nnu Ego's own resistance to her husband Nnaife's patriarchal hegemony will also be highlighted. Other noteworthy characters such as Ona, Kehinde and Mama Abby will get a fair share of attention since they too offer stiff resistance to the patriarchal dictates of the community and achieve measures of success.

At this juncture, it is imperative that I discuss the questions that guide this study. The problem is that available literature seems to represent women in African societies as silent victims of patriarchal oppression yet, as evidenced in this text, women have always resisted socio-economic and socio-cultural oppression. They have always been engaged in the quest for socio-economic parity with their male counterparts. The first question is: how do African societies represented in the selected texts enforce and promote the cultural and economic oppression of women? The contention of this study is that women have always been involved in various forms of resistance to the dictates of patriarchy hence the next question: what strategies do women in the selected texts adopt to subvert and mitigate socio-economic and socio-cultural oppression? In the process of unearthing the strategies in this text, I will also interrogate their effectiveness.

This then leads to the next question: to what extent are the resistance strategies adopted by the women in the selected texts effective and sustainable? The burden of proof in all this is to show that African women have not always been silent and voiceless victims of patriarchal oppression. It is important that I discuss, at this point, the mechanisms that patriarchy uses to oppress women as reflected in this text.

2.2 PATRIARCHAL MECHANISMS

2.2.1 Context

As he discusses the text, Killam (2004:44) observes that while it is generally acknowledged that there has been a drastic change in the notions of appropriate work for men and women, women are still expected to assume the same gender specific roles that entrench them deeper into patriarchal oppression. He further asserts that Emecheta's female characters are constrained by oppressive forces of tradition and socio-economic changes that are perverted to suit patriarchy. In view of this, male and female characters in the novel will also be compared especially looking at their culturally influenced perception of women namely marriage and motherhood.

This chapter, just like the subsequent ones, will employ a comparative framework in reading the text, in a bid to explore and expose African women's quest for socio-cultural and economic freedom. The novel is set between the early 1930s and the end of the Second World War, a transitional period that witnesses tremendous socio-economic, socio-political and cultural changes within the Igbo community. The book opens during one of the climaxes of the protagonist's emotional anguish where she has reached her wit's end and desires nothing but to commit suicide. The reason for this is the sudden and unexplainable death of her only infant son whom she has borne after a long wait that saw her suffer the harrowing humiliation of rejection and divorce for failure to conceive. That son, from her second marriage, had come as a great vindication and also as a fulfilment of her inherent desire to be a mother but now is dead.

The novel itself is a catalogue of the emotional, spiritual and physical suffering that the protagonist, Nnu Ego, goes through at the hands of her culture, husbands, sons (all encapsulated in patriarchy) and colonialism. The world order and its systems change so

quickly for her and she fails to catch up, leading to her lonely and piteous death in spite of her many and successful biological children, especially sons in whom she invests so much hope during their infancy.

Motherhood is one of the key issues that will be dealt with in this chapter as the ironic title of the book will be explored viz a vis the protagonist and the traditional patriarchal setting of the text. The position of women and the girl child will be looked at whilst juxtaposed to male dominance and stereotypical behaviour displayed by the characters as they respond to the order of their societal norms and values. In the same vein, the chapter will discuss womanhood, and sexuality in polygamy. I will also examine culturally groomed identity, which emerges from the strictly defined sexist parameters among the Igbo. This will help establish the culturally bound barriers to socio-cultural and economic emancipation that have bedevilled African women's quest for freedom.

The prospect of women's attainment of socio-cultural and economic emancipation will then also be examined in this chapter by looking at the views of the male and female characters and also comments by the narrator about their cultural practices, women enterprise and entrepreneurship. An exploration of the lived experiences of the characters in the geographical locations, like Ibuza, that have not yet received direct influence of colonialism will be contrasted with those that have direct contact with colonialism and the Second World War, like Lagos. Referring to the protagonist, Nnu Ego, Boehmer in Emecheta (1979:i) says that the weight of her gender history militates against the prosperity and self-reliance she works so hard to achieve. In this novel, Emecheta goes out of her way to demonstrate how the cultural and colonial odds are against the woman in general and especially her efforts towards socio-economic freedom.

2.2.2 Grooming

The genesis of this patriarchal tool is the grooming of children done by the community. Agbadi, Nnu Ego's father, displays this when he addresses his children: "My sons, you will all grow to be kings among men...[and to Nnu Ego] you will grow to rock your children's children, daughter of Agbadi and Ona" (27). This already paves the psychological line of

thought for the children and as they grow up; they will be determined to achieve and be that: women to have children and look after their children's children and men to rule.

Boys are groomed to have a positive self-image about their gender whereas the girl child is groomed to view her gender as inferior and to accept the culturally hewn roles of wife and mother. Whereas there are numerous instances in the novel where this is perceptible, I will cite a few patent ones. When asked to fetch water and prepare food together with the girls, Oshia blurts out, "I am not going...I am a boy...That's a woman's job" and the community members who hear this, both male and female, are in unison that he speaks "just like a boy" (143). This is after the boy has realized that together with his brother, they are "rare commodities and he being the oldest is rarer" (142). In like manner, when Oshia commiserates with Adaku who feels worthless after the death of her new-born son, he points out that she still has Dumbi, her daughter, to which Adaku responds that Oshia, being a boy, is worth more than ten Dumbis (142). Even the women themselves are groomed to accept this second-class role and articulate it quite well.

The girl child is considered as a cash-cow in patriarchal societies like the Igbo community where the text is set. When Nnu Ego is born, the parents look at her and do not just see her value as a human being but see her as an income generating machine hence the name Nnu Ego, which means 'a great amount of money.' By this, the parents do not see her bringing the money home through her intelligence or even hard work but through her being traded in marriage. This is typical commodification of women from where the issue of the bride price is derived. This is indicative of the view that there can only be something to be got from a woman as she is traded as goods. Her direct contribution to the socio-economic development of her community is not considered.

Petersen (1988:142) states that a girl child is made aware of the destiny awaiting her development and is prepared from the earliest age possible for the role of motherhood. In concurrence, Gaidzanwa reveals that studies have shown that upon learning of the sex of the child, parents and hospital staff immediately begin treating the child in accordance with gender stereotypes (Gaidzanwa, 1997:37). This tendency limits the girl child right from the onset because, entrenched in most people are the perceptions hitherto shaped by patriarchy,

which look down upon the girl child and prepares her to walk along the despised path of womanhood. This perception of the inferiority of women permeates into adulthood in both males and females to the detriment of women. The girl child is viewed as a liability. When his twin daughters are born, Nnaife does not even suggest their names because of disappointment. In his mind, he even says that due to the prevailing harsh economic atmosphere, if his wife has to have twins, they should at least be boys (141). The arrival of Nnu Ego's last twin girls has a subduing effect upon her, chiefly because of their gender and she feels more inadequate than ever for giving birth to twin daughters. Nnu Ego has a still birth, which is her last pregnancy and the fact that it is a girl, lessens her sense of loss (219). This further demonstrates how girls are viewed and not valued by the society. One would have expected her inherent maternal instincts to have taken the better of her and made her mourn the loss in full.

At the time Ubami (Nnaife's co-worker and neighbour) breaks the news of the death of Nnaife's first son, Nnaife gets shocked and says many things to which Ubami, in admonishment, responds "you must stop talking like a woman" (75). This serves as a reminder to Nnaife of the education he has received from childhood. These and many more examples show how boys are groomed into believing in their superiority. In the same manner, girls are indoctrinated to believe that they are inferior, and as that happens, they ingest the belief that they cannot contribute to society anything better in any other way except through marriage and bearing children, especially sons.

Whilst planning her finances, Nnu Ego asserts that because the twins are girls, they do not need to stay in school so very long that they can help her run the house and her business whilst boys attend school. Given the historical time when this happens, it is a clear denial of opportunity. Later, when one of the twins, Taiwo, asks why only the two of them have to water the garden and not the boys also, Nnu Ego tells her to stop moaning and quickly reminds her "You are a girl, you know," to which Taiwo responds that she knows since her mother reminds her of that all the time (197). This is clear evidence that the patriarchal culture in this community has had such an effect that even elderly women, mothers, are so blinkered to believe in their ascribed uselessness and worthlessness and are willing to propagate it to their posterity.

Patriarchy oppresses women by indoctrination; they are socialised into believing that they are useless. This guarantees the perpetuation of this perception from generation to generation. This explains why even up to this age such notions of gender disparity still exist in certain pockets of African communities. A practical example in this respect, as Niikondo (2010:66) puts it, are the women in the Aawambo communities in Namibia who accept that to be beaten by a man is a normal practice and that it is wrong to resist such behaviour. This type of acculturation is detrimental to the socio-economic growth of women since it works negatively on the self, the ego and identity.

2.2.3 Marriage

2.2.3.1 Interference

In a patriarchal system, the final destination of the girl child is the snare called marriage. Petersen (1988:142) observes that marriage, in the African context, is a relationship between two groups and not just two people. This then calls for much interference, most of it unwarranted and biased, and this frustrates the woman in the marriage.

Nnaife, as a father, does not invest time in his daughters and only selfishly acknowledges their usefulness when they reach marriageable ages. He muses that fathers planned for and had sleepless nights over boys and not girls who must assist with the household chores and be disposed of through marriage, as soon as possible (230). The community largely participates in the selection of a husband for the girl child. She is not expected to choose her own husband nor refuse the one chosen for her by the parents or community or else it is considered a taboo. On her death bed, Ona, the icon of women's independence, asks her man Agbadi to "allow" their daughter to have a husband if she wants one. This is quite a bold statement although once again it gives men precedence over women for she still has to be allowed or denied the choice. Agbadi's friend, Obi Idayi, upon seeing the supposed ripeness of the girl NnuEgo, advises his friend to "let someone marry this girl [for] she has long passed the age of puberty" (27). This again is another indicator of who determines who and when a girl can marry. He even further chides his friend to stop rejecting young men to which Agbadi

responds that he has promised Amatokwu that he would consider his son. This is further evidence of the non-involvement of the girl in the choice of her husband.

When Nnu Ego's first marriage fails, she stays at her father's home until she recovers her womanhood that she has lost through barrenness. When she feels ready to have a man, she can only show signs but cannot make a move until her father decides to get her another husband, a man neither her father nor herself has seen. She takes the trip to Lagos only to discover that her new husband is far from her dream man in terms of his means of making a living and also his physique. She is not attracted to him at all but cannot think of going back to her father since she knows that though he is the best father, going back would be overstaying her welcome. The patriarchal background that she is bred in forbids her to express herself and rather forces her to endure a marriage she should instead enjoy. This is yet another instance that highlights the stifling of women even in such personal matters as choice of a marriage partner.

2.2.3.2 Virginit

Davies in Olaniyan and Quayson (2007:564) observes that a married woman becomes a possession, voiceless, and often right-less in her husband's family. This is because once in marriage, there are set expectations that again put women at a disadvantage and these help in shattering their self-esteem, which is a necessary ingredient on the route to emancipation. On the marriage night, all community members are eager to know whether the bride is a virgin or not. If she is, they celebrate, and if she is not, the community gets embarrassed. This is a serious invasion of privacy that denies a woman the right to the free expression of her sexuality. Nothing is required of the groom who may not have been a virgin himself, whereas for a bride who is not a virgin, wedding kegs of palm wine are half-filled for her humiliation (29). Marriage in this regard can be viewed as an instrument that serves to advance patriarchal systems of control over women's lives.

2.2.3.3 Polygamy, Sexuality and Chastity

Polygamy is one aspect that also bolsters male superiority over the female gender. As long as it is institutionalised, it allows for the disparity between the genders and stifles the socio-

economic freedom of women in the various communities where it thrives. It is a symbol of great entrapment which robs women of vital time as their energies are more channelled on competition in pleasing their husbands especially in childbearing. This is closely tied to chastity within marriage, which is a rigid requirement demanded only from the wife and not the husband since it is a culturally permissible practice in the Igbo community where this text is set for a husband to get himself another wife or to inherit one or more of his brother's widows as Nnaife does. Though it is like this, there is clear evidence of its negative effects on women.

With this precedent set, the woman is left with no choice but to accept the set up with its consequences no matter how this affects her. On the night that Nnaife's new wife comes, Nnu Ego fights back tears as she prepares her own bed for Nnaife, her husband, and Adaku, the inherited wife. Women have to go through such humiliation in obedience to culture and in the process experience psychological trauma that shatters and demeans their ego and self-image and leaves them vulnerable and powerless. Nnu Ego has to endure the noises of her co-wife as she engages in sexual activity with her husband since the accommodation is just one room and they only have to put a curtain in between to create another room. This is another socio-cultural handicap that leads to sexuality problems within such polygamous marriages, since it is clear that Nnaife cannot afford to cater for his family.

Nnaife and Adaku's sexual activity is reminiscent of the chief Agbadi's young wives who are known throughout the village for showing signs of sexual starvation. This is because their husband is always on the hunt "for some other exciting, tall and proud female" since he gets bored of them as he watches each of them sink into domesticity and motherhood (5). Nnu Ego suffers the same torture when she complains about sexual neglect to her first husband Amatokwu. He retorts: "I am a busy man, I have no time to waste my precious male seed on a woman who is infertile-you don't appeal to me anymore" (31). This is because he now has a second wife and is now insensitive to the sexual needs of his first wife. According to culture, she cannot seek sexual fulfilment outside of marriage. Such an attitude demeans the women and in one way or the other, hinders their social development and negatively affects their productivity. Culture demands that they stick to their husbands as running away because of sexual deprivation is an unheard of issue in this setting.

Apart from the sexual starvation cited earlier, Agbadi's first wife, Agunwa, is taken ill on the night her husband makes love to his mistress Ona, in the home. As Agbadi is discussing the illness with his friend, Idayi, two issues are obvious: she has suffered immense strain as a result of Agbadi's illness and injury, and she has been affected by the fact that her husband has chosen to have sexual intercourse, not with any of his legal wives but a mistress, at such a precarious time in his life as this. This shows the extent to which polygamy and promiscuity can affect women even in such a community. This is why Agbadi is in disbelief and opposes his friend who correctly diagnoses the cause of Agunwa's suffering. Agbadi's argument is that as senior wife, she should be mature enough not to mind that and he even asks what example she would be setting to her co-wives if she would behave like that. Agbadi here fails to understand that as senior wife, she wants the privilege to nurse her husband but this is denied her but, Ona, the mistress, is allowed to be there by his side until the time of his recovery. This is another instance of unquestioned subservience demanded in marriage which renders the woman voiceless.

Agunwa, the once revered senior wife, degenerates into a martyr because of the inhibitions of the patriarchal system. Gaidzanwa rightfully points out that this martyr role of rural women as injured but innocent makes them ideal wives and mothers (Gaidzanwa, 1997:12). Agunwa becomes so voiceless that she dies from stress, frustration, disappointment and depression without uttering a word about her feelings. She sacrifices her freedom of expression to maintain her dignity as senior wife all in appeasement of the patriarchal system. As a social being, the patriarchal system has robbed her of that ability since rejecting a polygamous set up would have been an abomination viewed as anti-social behaviour. Such stoicism and "voicelessness" among women is still found in some pockets in contemporary Africa hence the continued drive by so many affirmative action organisations today to encourage the total emancipation of women.

2.2.3.4 Childbearing and Motherhood

This then leads us to one marriage ingredient that Emecheta emphasises in this novel and that is childbearing, which culminates in motherhood. The intensity of its significance is carried over from the grooming stage where the girl child is groomed mentally and socially for the inevitable destination of marriage whose mainstay is procreation. The societal expectation is

that immediately after the marriage rite, there should be a pregnancy and many more subsequent ones since, according to Taiwo (1984:2), a childless marriage has no place in African traditional life. This is why Agbadi hopefully boasts that in less than ten months of Nnu Ego's marriage, the Amatokwu family would come back and thank them for the birth of her baby.

Guided by the same belief, Agbadi's wives would always rush to check on her tummy each time Nnu Ego would visit her father's home and would register open disappointment on the discovery that she still has not conceived. When there are clear signs of delayed conception, there are traumatic psychological effects on Nnu Ego which lead to her shrinking more and more into herself and in the privacy of her bedroom (30). This imprisons her further. Where initially she has been a confident woman who is self assured especially because of the value her father attaches to her during the marriage rite, she now feels inadequate because of her failure to conceive. She nurses a guilty conscience because she feels that she is failing everybody and quickly notices that even her father looks at her in a strange way. Whilst the society acknowledges that biologically it takes a male and a female for a pregnancy to be, the blame lies squarely on the woman if there is no conception.

Nnu Ego is soon a senior wife in the infancy of her bridehood because the Amatokwu family acts frantically and swiftly to get her husband another wife. Her status is degraded to the level of any farm worker in spite of her acquired status of senior wife which normally would have accorded her some societal reverence, had it not been for her barrenness. She rightfully complains to her husband about sexual deprivation. She goes on to divulge her pain because of her childless state. He, however, derides her by saying that he cannot waste his male seeds on an infertile woman and further suggests that if she cannot produce sons, then the least she can do is to harvest yams. Even the production of yams, which is supposed to be an economically viable engagement, is relegated to be the preserve of the barren.

Barrenness robs women even of judicial fairness where arbitration may be required. Nnu Ego ill-treats Adaku's visitor, Igbonoba's wife, and when Adaku hears of it, she immediately summons Nwakusor and Ubani to arbitrate. Their patriarchal background veils them so much that all they can conclude is that Adaku has no right to complain against her senior wife since

Nnu Ego has sons, hence she is immortalising her husband whereas the complainant only has daughters who will soon go away to build another man's immortality (185). This is evidence of a profoundly biased judiciary system that is heavily influenced by patriarchal tendencies and this shows the existence of a yawning gap of disparity between the sexes.

Apart from her biological inability to conceive in her first marriage, Nnu Ego shows that for all intents and purposes, she is a mother. She mothers her co-wife's son so well that at times she would keep the baby throughout the night. She even gets tempted to breastfeed him which she does so well, just like any other mother. This is proof of her womanhood and clearly shows that motherhood can exist even in the absence of the biological aspect. However, Ngcobo, in Petersen (1986:148), postulates that African motherhood is about children. This is yet another patriarchal technique to thwart the socio-economic freedom of women as this attitude inhibits the exposure of their full potential since it emphasises the inadequacy that they already feel which is tantamount to stigmatization.

It is my contention that motherhood is not limited to the biological ability to produce children. Embedded within motherhood is the nurturing nature that takes responsibility of the physical, social and moral growth of any child. In view of this, infertile or barren women should not be denied the opportunity to express this type of non-biological motherhood if they so wish, as is the case with Nnu Ego. When she is caught breastfeeding the co-wife's son, Nnu Ego is beaten, humiliated and chased away and that signals the end of her marriage. The baby does not suffer any physical or medical problems as a result of the breastfeeding hence the need to explore this act and possibly allow it to help barren women express themselves and feel the physical and emotional bond that is created through such acts. That feeling of completeness, as Nnu Ego feels when mothering the baby, spruces up her image and, had it been allowed, could have helped her achieve her full potential without the feelings of inadequacy brought about by her biological barrenness. However, as Gaidzanwa observes, part of rural women's innocence is their inability to rebel against or repay their men for actual insult or injury suffered (Gaidzanwa, 1997:12). They rather offer effective passive resistance that brings the desired transformation within their communities.

Motherhood has yet another dimension in *The Joys of Motherhood*. Adaku declares that she is not “prepared to stay here and be turned into a mad woman just because I have no sons” (188). This, in other words, shows that though a woman may have children, if she does not have sons then she is inadequate. So barrenness in this context can also be defined as the inability to bear sons. When Nnu Ego’s first son dies, she thinks of committing suicide, an act that is indicative of the depth of her psychological disturbance since her life revolves around her ability to bear children, particularly sons. Adaku, in sharp contrast, refuses to bow to this and decides to break free. She appreciates that she has children irrespective of their gender.

When Nnu Ego finally has her own children, especially the sons she earnestly yearns for, she achieves momentary self-fulfilment. She has dreams about her future with her sons where she envisages herself finally attaining self-actualization. However, as fate would have it, her sons develop a thirst for academic education which herself and Nnaife fail to understand. In spite of her confusion, as the mother that she is, she still gives moral and financial support to her sons who are in pursuit of the never-ending education, with an ardent hope that all will be well in the end. She eventually develops bitterness and dies a neglected and very lonely woman in spite of her having produced children who are still alive when she dies.

In quite an indirect way, Emecheta reveals that motherhood on its own is not just biological and neither is it a panacea for all problems that beset women. The motherhood presented in this text is a construct of patriarchy that emphasises the biological aspect. Much as it is celebrated in patriarchal circles, motherhood should not be cause for optimism as it is not a guarantee for the celebrated future that Nnu Ego envisages. The sons who are celebrated at their birth, literally do nothing for the mother whilst the daughters, scorned at their birth, are the ones who at least take care of her and of the other siblings and give Nnu Ego hope that the younger children will be taken care of.

2.2.3.5 Provision

In terms of provision for his immediate family, Nnaife is a total failure. In spite of this, he continues to marry even through unforced inheritance of his brother’s wife who is even old enough to be his mother. He marries her in order to enhance his manly image in spite of his socio-economic limitations. Within a short time, Adankwo becomes pregnant “with her

menopausal baby” (206). Here is a man who has failed to assess his economic status and has hence failed to come to terms with his reality. This is double insensitivity on his part in terms of the economic atmosphere and also the respect that should have been accorded to this woman. This situation also compounds Nnu Ego’s emotional and economic burdens as she has to welcome her and then they have to share the scant resources available. Nnaife is the man who occupies the biggest portion in the plot of the novel compared to other men in the text and he becomes Emecheta’s statement about what men are capable or incapable of.

The socio-economic atmosphere in the text needs to be looked at from the point of view of both male and female characters within this text. Both genders have some form of contribution to the economic advancement of the home or family but Emecheta has an agenda for her target audience and this is telling in the way she portrays her characters. The rural-based men have an acceptable means of wealth production and Emecheta does not say much about them and the same applies to the rural based women. It is the urban men that she foregrounds and contrasts with the women in order to prove that women are socio-economically viable contributions to communities in spite of the archaic patriarchal beliefs that have portrayed women in a different manner. This is one of the contentions of STIWANISM and the women characters show their viability through non-confrontational subtle resistance.

2.3 THE RESISTANCE

2.3.1 Ona: The Old Guard

Ona, Nnu Ego’s mother, is a sharp contrast of Nnu Ego. She is an icon of women’s freedom. About Ona, Emecheta writes:

Ona [...] was a very beautiful woman who managed to combine stubbornness with arrogance. So stubborn was she that she refused to live with Agbadi. Men being what they are, he preferred spending his free time with her, with this woman who enjoyed humiliating him by refusing to be his wife. Many a night she would send him away, saying she did not feel like having anything to do with him, even though Agbadi was

supposed to be that kind of man women should say such things to. But she refused to be dazzled by his wealth, his name or his handsomeness. People said Nwokocha Agbadi spent all his life on this earth courting his Ona. (6)

This is a woman who speaks not from any influence by the West but from her own perceptions as an African woman. Ona is projected as a woman who is mentally and emotionally sound. She is a woman who has the ability to articulate what she desires in an uninhibited manner. The citation above shows a woman who has resisted patriarchal hegemony and has scored a significant amount of success. Wealth, name and handsomeness are qualities that patriarchy has labelled as irresistible, hence the expectation that every woman should be enticed by them. Ona, however, overcomes that. Ona's refusal to marry is "ostensibly to please her father but we learn that the real reason is to allow herself to maintain her sexual and economic independence" (Mclean, 2003:3). She has attained self-fulfilment. "Ona, unlike NnuEgo, knows that a woman does not need a man to be complete, neither does selfhood mean perpetual motherhood" (Nnoromele, 2002:185).

On her deathbed, Ona impresses this notion undoubtedly to Agbadi. "See that however much you love our daughter Nnu Ego, you must allow her to have a life of her own, a husband if she wants one. Allow her to be a woman" (26). Her idea of womanhood runs counter to the general notion that African women equate womanhood or selfhood to motherhood (Nnoromele, 2002:185). Mclean (2003:3) concurs with Nnoromele when she says "through this scene, Ona asserts that a real woman is one whose feelings of worth do not depend on fulfilling the expectations of a father or husband; a woman who does not define herself as a chattel, but an independent individual." Her desire and hope is that her daughter or any woman for that matter be the architect of her destiny. This resonates well with STIWANIST discourse that champions a parity that allows women to explore their potential in every area of human endeavour. At the same time, it shows how misplaced extant literature's representation of African women as silent victims of patriarchal oppression is.

2.3.2 Questioning Manhood

Given the glorified image of the male species by the patriarchal system, I feel that Emecheta's view of the men characters in this novel needs to be explored especially in light

of how women see them. This helps to show some independent assessments made by women that come spontaneously. Nnu Ego, a woman who has experience of both rural and urban lives, is a character that Emecheta painstakingly develops to reveal the veil with which cultural beliefs cover society in general and women in particular. Eventually, as the plot unfolds, Nnu Ego unbelievably awakens to the existing gender disparity.

The relationship between Nnu Ego and Nnaife is a turbulent one. Nnu Ego, at her point of entry into Nnaife's life, shows that she has a mind of her own. Whereas patriarchy expects her to hero-worship her husband, she shows disdain and condescension after looking at his physical appearance. In her view, Nnaife falls far short of the patriarchal standards of manhood. Even Nnaife can tell that she does not approve of him as a husband. Nnu Ego exercises her resistance to Nnaife's patriarchal hegemony by comparing his sexual skills with those of her first husband "who would glide inside her when she was ready, not this short, fat, stocky man, whose body almost crushed hers" (45).

Nnu Ego feels that even physically, Nnaife is inadequate as a man. He does not "smell healthy either, unlike men in Ibuza who had the healthy smell of burning wood and tobacco. This one [Nnaife] smelt all soapy, as if he was over-washed" (45). When she arrives in Lagos from Ibuza, the first thing that worries her is the fact that her husband "washes women's underwear" to earn a living. (50); washing "the white woman's smalls" (49), Nnu Ego despises him even more.

Nnaife suggests that they get married in church and Nnu Ego resists that. She is not given reason enough to be convinced. She sees that Nnaife just wants to do that to please his employer and according to her, he is a spineless man. "Oh dear mother, was this a man she was living with? How could a situation rob a man of his manhood without him knowing it?" (52) She sees him as a caricature of a man, hence her lament "I want to live with a man, not a woman-made man" (52). Though Nnu Ego is subjected by patriarchy, she resists Nnaife's patriarchal hegemony and has a say on almost all issues to do with their sustenance and child upbringing. Her resistance challenges the patriarchal notion that every man is a hero to his wife.

All the chores that she has always been taught are meant for women are the ones that the men in her immediate life in Lagos do. When her friend Cordelia later confides in her, she comes to understand the paradigm shift that “men here are too busy being white men’s servants to be men” (53). Though the men bring substance to the home, the method they use is at variance with the traditional manly way.

In a subtle subversion of the patriarchal hegemony, Nnu Ego declares in a court of law that “Nnaife is the head of our family. He owns me, just like God in the sky owns us” (245). At face value, this statement suggests that she ascribes a deity status to her husband, an obvious expectation of patriarchy. However, one can detect a sense of mockery in that statement. Mockery is one of the weapons that women use to undermine patriarchy hence the jeering and laughter in the courtroom. Nnaife is far from being a god especially given his status at the utterance of this statement. He is financially challenged, has been arraigned before a court of law and is eventually incarcerated. This is a mockery of patriarchy since this paragon of masculinity is so emasculated.

2.3.3 Women’s Enterprise and Entrepreneurship

There is clear evidence that there are women in this novel who have managed to wriggle themselves free of some patriarchal clutches and can express themselves freely to some extent. When Nnu Ego is in a quandary, it is not the man that comes to her rescue but other women, Ibuza wives, who equip her with entrepreneurial skills. As Owerri, the cook’s wife correctly states that the women are sisters on a pilgrimage, they have a “stokvel” kind of fund from which she borrows so that she starts her trade in cigarettes and matches and within six months she has achieved some sort of economic freedom. “The women realize that a woman without her own economic power is not free” (Nnoromele, 2002:186). There is clear understanding of the significance of socio-economic freedom hence the quest for socio-economic parity. This signifies that on their own and given an opportunity to prove themselves, women can make economic inroads that can uplift the family and the family is the core unit of any society.

The Lagos community is a total departure from the Ibuza one economically. As Nnu Ego muses after the birth of Oshia, “in Ibuza, women made a contribution but in urban Lagos,

men had to be the sole providers; this new setting robbed the woman of her useful role” (87). Nnu Ego is in a transitional stage and she vacillates between her expected role as an Ibuza wife and her reality in urban Lagos. In Lagos the traditional responsibilities ascribed to men fall squarely on the shoulders of the women. Her entrepreneurial role is heavily hampered by her cultural beliefs. She attributes the death of her first son, Ngozi, to her decision to engage in enterprising activities then vows to play it according to the new rules which entail being satisfied with Nnaife’s income whilst she looks after her child. This decision is taken and backfires as she sinks into poverty once again.

Men spend much of their time at their workplaces but still do not produce enough to satisfy the needs of the family, unlike the Ibuza men, and the women have to play a complementary role to supplement the income. The men in Lagos only focus on one source of income which is employment thereby enslaving themselves to the scourge of employment-dependence. This dependence creates a false sense of security in employment, and they are snared to employment for the rest of their productive lives. The men are so blinkered that they do not think of other income generating means.

The women, on the other hand, engage in various income-generating activities. Such kinds of trade thrive and are not depended on an employer, hence their viability in any economic climate, if managed well. Employment, which is the mainstay of Lagos men’s economic viability, can end. Emecheta crafts her plot in such a way that men’s dependence on employment is contrasted to women’s enterprise in order to prove that women can still contribute to the socio-economic development of society if that reality is openly acknowledged.

2.3.4 Men and Women’s Coping Strategies Compared

With the advent of the First World War, Dr Meers, Nnaife’s employer, has to leave Nigeria and go back to England and that effectively means the end of employment for Nnaife and the other men that depend on the Meers for income. Nnaife and Ubani, the men, are brought to their wit’s ends when the news is broken to them and their response is the unuttered question: “What are we going to do?” (92). They are stranded and cannot think of anything else to do

to bring substance to their families. The men are given their severance packs and very good references and these are the things Nnaife holds on to, coupled with the hope that a new master will be coming soon.

Nnaife reveals that he is a man who is contented with his role as employee and does not seem to think that he can engage in income-generating activities outside the employ of a master. Colonialism has thus persuaded him of his economic uselessness outside employment. Soon the money runs out but Nnaife does not see himself getting income from any other source except from employment. At this point, Emecheta takes the liberty to highlight the lack of innovation and creativity of men and contrasts this sharply with the foresight and economic awareness of women.

When Nnu Ego points out their lack of money and then indicates that she wants Oshia to start school, Nnaife proudly reminds her of the importance of washing white women's underclothes, his job that provided the family with income, a job he no longer has. After observing that Nnaife has sunk into escapism through his indefinable laughter coupled with his addiction to the guitar that he finds in the Meers's home, and that he is content with waiting for the new employer whilst he does nothing, Nnu Ego suggests that she starts her trade again. What ensues is an argument in which Nnaife does not want her to engage in any form of enterprise citing the death of Ngozi and also refusing to take care of baby Oshia. When eventually Nnu Ego revives her trade, there is a clear reversal of roles as Nnaife also has to look after Oshia, a duty he does not like at all since he considers it to be the preserve of women. In their continued conversation, Nnu Ego points out that Nnaife does not make any effort to look for employment and is content with waiting for the new employer whose coming is uncertain.

It is Nnu Ego, the woman, who decides to take the risk of going to the island to get cartons of cigarettes for black market trading purposes and Nnaife whines about the risk since it is an unlawful trade. Given the traditional set-up and expectations, one would have expected Nnaife the man to be the one taking the risk. It takes a violent argument with his wife for Nnaife to emerge from his slumber and start looking for work again. Emecheta brings to the fore the coping mechanisms of men, here represented by Nnaife's guitar, and laughter

escapism, which symbolise improvidence and some form of barrenness and then contrasts that with women's coping mechanism, here represented by Nnu Ego's industriousness and enterprise that yields substance and hope to the family.

The above is testament of the fact that the inclusion of African women in social transformation, the core of STIWANISM, can indeed yield fruit. Relegating women to the peripheries in terms of socio-economic development will only deny Africa of a hand that can help to expedite its development and competitiveness with the rest of the world.

The employers, being the ones on whose economy the employed men are dependant, abuse that power and ill-treat and oppress their employees. As a result of that influence, when Nnaife finally lands another job as a grass cutter, another menial job, he gains some respect from his wife and can now afford to beat her up (130). Such is the scourge of employment which focuses on power and control and brings about entrapment of the weaker and the dependent. When Nnaife's wives complain about the insufficient flow of funds in the family and stage something akin to a demonstration, Nnaife, exemplifying colonial employers, totally withdraws even the little that the wives are complaining about and watches his family starve as he drowns himself in alcohol (151).

2.3.5 Motherhood and Fatherhood

When the Lagos men are conscripted into the army to fight in the World War, they display disturbing lines of thought especially about their money vis-a-vis their families. Upon being told that his family will live off what he will earn whilst fighting in the war, Nnaife gets into a shock and has to recover from it with bitterness that they, his family, will enjoy his earnings. The same goes for Ibekwe who, after being told the same, opts that the money rather goes to his parents for them to manage it and his family can only receive what they deem necessary. After hearing this, Nnaife admires the decision made by Ibekwe. Emecheta here makes a subtle point that though men can father children and have families, this is merely a biological process since inwardly some do not possess that fatherliness that is commensurate with that title and position. This then leaves the women and children vulnerable since they are groomed from infancy to look up to their husbands and fathers respectively for sustenance.

The biological aspect of motherhood that the main female characters Nnu Ego and Adaku lack at some points in their lives is contrasted with the biological fatherhood that these men possess but, whereas the women display their maternal and motherhood instincts through their inward care for their families, the men lack that commitment and attachment, leaving them biological fathers bereft of fatherhood. Emecheta here is preparing the reader to brace for the emergence of the new women who are quite enterprising and have the ability to analyse the prevailing socio-economic terrain and strategise accordingly. This is a direct call for the inclusion of women in socio-economic development since there is more evidence in the text that points at their productivity especially in comparison to their male counterparts.

2.3.6 Investment and Financial Management

Mama Abby, the elderly and successful single mother, is one character who plays a pivotal role in the paradigm shift that occurs in the protagonist in this novel. She is a woman of note in her community and the most remarkable thing about her is that she does not have a man with her physically but she manages her life quite successfully, economically. Her life already is at variance with what the patriarchal system would expect. Her successes would have made more sense in the system if there had been a man leading and guiding her.

Mama Abby values education and instils the same values in Nnu Ego who takes long to assimilate the change but eventually yields to reason. Mama Abby invests substantial amounts of money on her only son to secure her a happy old age. Unlike Nnu Ego who initially thinks that the bearing of children is the panacea to all her problems, Mama Abby sees beyond just the son; she sees an educated son. She also has an impact on Adaku who in turn vows to educate her daughters to secure their own future livelihood and hers as well. She goes on to vow that Nnaife would not send them to any husband before they are ready. The remnants of the patriarchal system are still visible since she appears more concerned about their readiness but will not have a problem with Nnaife sending them to any husband of his choice.

Mama Abby is the one who introduces Nnu Ego to the banking system, a total departure from what Nnu Ego is used to, given her background. She, in spite of her ignorance, maintains a

Post Office savings account and is able to earn some profit even. Once she is exposed to it, she sees its value and continues operating it in a disciplined manner. Her husband, though he was on a salaried job as a domestic worker, never had a bank account until his discharge from duty. This is already a sign of an economic awakening on her part and though she has started it late in her life, there is no doubt that she has set a pace for her children.

2.3.7 The Renegades

Adaku recognises the need to choose what is best for her and her children. After leaving her matrimonial home, Adaku establishes a market stall which progresses so well that Nnaife, the former husband, is jealous at the knowledge that the young woman is progressing so well without him. Adaku does not confine herself to just the market stall but diversifies into sewing, a necessary skill that she teaches herself. This can easily be contrasted to the stranded stance that Nnaife takes when his employment is terminated at the end of Dr. Meers's tenure. He does not think of any other options though options are available to him. The analogy justifies STIWANISM's call for the inclusion of African women in the socio-economic arena. Leaving them out denies the African continent of so much unfathomable potential which she can harness for her socio-economic uplifting.

Adaku takes the stance of a renegade as she charts the way to her own social and economic independence. She declares that Nnu Ego worries too much to please their husband, a worry that has proven to be a detriment to the economic freedom of women in a polygamous set up. This is a call for independence and it comes as no surprise when she decides to leave her matrimonial home. To emphasise her independence, she consciously and purposefully chooses to become a prostitute. This is highly indicative of limited alternative economic routes for women in a patriarchal system. In the same vein, she is also expressing her independence in her sexuality.

Adaku takes time to study her environment and makes informed decisions based on her observations. She takes cognisance of the fact that Yoruba families send their daughters to school and vows to do the same for her daughters. She also undertakes to safeguard her daughters from their father's whims should he want to send them to any man before they are ready. By so doing, she becomes the pioneer in embracing the emancipation of the girl child.

Unlike other women of her era, she is a new mother who refuses to pass on to her daughters the notion of subservience to men. She has experienced it and has gone along with it to some extent but she will not impose it upon her daughters. Her display of determination to break free from the longstanding pattern of patriarchal oppression in this instance helps to jolt her co-wife, Nnu Ego, to the present reality.

Adaku vehemently rejects aspects of African tradition that oppress women, even her personal god: 'My *chi* be damned! I am going to be a prostitute. Damn my *chi*' (188). This goes against her tradition and religion and it marks the advent of women who can make her own decisions about their sexuality, children and marital status in total defiance of traditional norms that deny women of such freedoms. "She picks and chooses from tradition and modernity, discarding the customs that will disadvantage her like being a virtuous wife to Nnaife" (McClean, 2003:6). By creating such a character, Emecheta makes the statement that though tradition is to be respected; it is not everything in it that must be perpetuated.

In her discussion with Nnu Ego, Adaku observes that though the patriarchal set up hinders them greatly; women themselves set up impossible standards for themselves and in the process make life intolerable for each other. She vehemently declares that she has set her own standards and this is a sure sign of change. Adaku later reverses her decision and abandons prostitution because she does not want to depend on men for anything though she acknowledges that they have their uses. She says she wants to become a dignified single woman, a phenomenon unheard of in her community especially given her age.

Adaku, the individual, is such a success that she has become the envy of many men and women. She has weathered the storms and has proven beyond any reasonable doubt that women can fend for themselves, make decisions, implement them and become socio-economically independent beings who can contribute immensely to the socio-economic development of a nation. Her bold and implemented decision to accord her daughters academic education resonates well with Warner's observation that "girls are a critical demographic for social change and global development, representing a large and underserved population in the developing world" (Warner, 2012:2). Warner et al's paper makes a case for why leveraging education to facilitate girls' transitions to healthy, safe and productive

adulthood is the single most important development investment that can be made. This contention accedes to the push by Adaku to champion the cause of the women folk in Africa and affords women a hitherto denied access to academic education, a phenomenon that has now been rank shifted to the position of a basic human right internationally and which African countries have ratified under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 28). The definition of children is now all-inclusive and puts both sexes on a par.

When Kehinde, one of Nnaife's twin girls, feels she is ready for marriage, she chooses the man to marry and the man happens to be a Yoruba. By tradition, there cannot be such cross-marriages since Kehinde is Igbo. Nnaife threatens her and chooses a man for her but she rejects her father's choice and makes her own choice of husband and Nnaife is infuriated. He gets so consumed with this that he runs rampage and is eventually charged with attempted murder and is incarcerated. Kehinde does not engage in a physical confrontation with her father but simply elopes and gets the husband of her choice. She reasons in an independent way and this signals the emergence of that new breed of African women who will not be cowed down by the dictates of patriarchy.

Whereas patriarchy has held down African women in such a way as to confine them to marriage and childbearing, there has arisen a new breed of African women whose mentality resonates with IKhaxas (2005:xxix) who posits that culture is not fixed but rather an evolving social construction that can be challenged and changed. This is a true contention because though people may talk about culture, we no longer have wholesome cultures. Most have been infiltrated by the agents of globalisation that bring innovations like technology that adulterate cultures. The remnants of most of our cultures exist largely because the powers that be, who are mostly men, select what is to remain as long as it advantages them generally.

O'Donnell (1992:172) contends that women suffer discrimination because of their sex and have specific needs which remain negated and unsatisfied and the satisfaction would require radical change or revolution in the social, economic and political order. This transformation requires the emergence of a new breed of African women that believes in their potential as human beings and is self-assured that they can make meaningful developments within their

communities. As the novel tapers to the end, the hitherto stoical Nnu Ego appears to echo and develop her mother, Ona's wish that she uttered on her death bed. Ona told Agbadi to allow Nnu Ego to be a woman and Nnu Ego's prayer is "God, when will you create a woman who will be fulfilled in herself, a full human being, not anybody's appendage?" (209). This plea reflects the STIWANISTIC mission that seeks a serious transformation of the society in such a way as to include women in social and economic development in Africa. The plea and its undertones reverberate even to this present day as numerous organisations have been formed to ensure the freedom of women. Nnu Ego further asks a rhetorical question, "But who made the law that we should not hope in our daughters" (210) and also observes that it is the women who subscribe to that law more than the men. This is a timeless observation that will be further explored and exemplified in the subsequent chapters.

The prominent women in this text, Ona, Mama Abby, Adaku and Kehinde take the initiative albeit at a small scale. These show a glimmer of hope for the African women. The utterances and actions of these women, especially the dawning of reality on Nnu Ego, prepare this study for the next chapter that will reveal how education and economic attainment through employment, play a pivotal role in the envisaged route to the emancipation of African women and their quest for socio-cultural freedom. Emecheta's presentation of her principal character Nnu Ego's suffering in a male-dominated society shows that there is a need for women to be freed from the yoke of patriarchal oppression in order for them to participate freely in their societies (Nyanhongo, 2011:64). As Petersen (1988:150) correctly observes, this raises a crucial question for African women today: that of self-definition and self-determination. The subsequent chapters will examine these issues and will show how their manifestation champions the cause of socio-cultural and economic emancipation among African women.

Such female agents of change are not viewed lightly within communities where patriarchy still runs supreme. Niikondo (2010:66) says that a woman who fights with men is perceived as abnormal and her behaviour is contrary to societal norms and values.

Apart from the protagonist, Nnu Ego, there are other seemingly insignificant minor characters that also project the extent of male dominance that exacerbates the suffering of women in the

text. As a Chief, it is provided for Agbadi, in the patriarchal dictates of that time, to take the most beautiful women as wives or slaves from the villages they would have raided.

2.4 CONCLUSION

In view of all that has been discussed in this chapter, the title of the novel emerges as a great irony in the sense that apart from the momentary joy that is experienced at the birth of a child, we do not see any joy in motherhood at all. The whole text sounds as if it is a mockery of motherhood and all who ascribe such importance to it.

Motherhood as we know it today is a construct of patriarchy-it has nothing to do with what women feel or think, as we would expect, but rather what men think of women. It is for this reason that Ngcobo (1988) believes that most African women “take motherhood to be all about children [...] every woman is encouraged to marry and get children in order to express her womanhood to the full.” All this is because the patriarchal system does not accept barrenness and continues to uphold the boy-child as superior to the girl-child. “A barren woman is seen as incomplete [...] dead end of human life, not only for genealogical level but also for herself” (Akujobi, 2011:3). Nnu Ego suffers immensely during her barrenness and one would have expected some relief when her womb opens up but she suffers a plethora of disappointments in her life journey as a mother.

As a girl, she enjoys much admiration and exudes much hope and promise but all this is overturned as she experiences humiliation and frustration in marriage and motherhood at the hands of patriarchy. As Nnu Ego approaches her death, she is cared for more by her daughters and her daughters are the last she sees of her offspring before she dies. When her son-in-law Magnus, Taiwo’s husband, offers to look after the youngest children, Nnu Ego finds it difficult to let go for she says she does not know how to be anything but a mother, hence taking away the children from her would be like taking away the only life she has ever known. When she finally boards the mammy-lorry, the driver is so impressed with the send-off she is given by the daughters that he comments: “Its’ nice to have daughters...you must be full of joy, madam” and it sounds as if he is rubbing in the pain she is enduring (252).

All her life she has desired to have sons and to be cared for at such a time as this by her sons and definitely, she has no joy at all at this moment. She dies a lonely woman because she never had time to make friends as she was busy building up her joys as a mother (253). This then shows the futility of her pursuit of the patriarchal type of motherhood and also shows her martyrdom as the author rightfully concludes that “the joy of being a mother was the joy of giving all to your children” just as Nnu Ego does in her life (254). A further irony is that whilst she is young and yearns for children, Nnu Ego pleads with her *chi* to give her children but when she dies and is in a position to give children as it were, she never makes any woman fertile. One would have expected that after all she went through she would be the first to quickly come to the rescue of childless women especially given the importance she attaches to motherhood.

Patriarchy, the arch rival of STIWANISM, has been extensively discussed in this chapter especially how it determines social constructs such as marriage, childbearing and childrearing, sexuality and motherhood. The analysis pointed out how patriarchy exacerbates the effects of colonialism even in private institutions like marriage. In their discussion, Cordelia correctly observes about their husbands that if “their masters treat them badly; they take it out on us” (54). Just as colonialism guarantees the Whiteman’s control of the Blackman, patriarchy equally guarantees men’s control of women and this has a limiting effect on men as on women.

The rendition above helps us to conclude that whilst African women may have lived in oppressive patriarchal societies for a long time, they were not broken. They devised survival strategies that sustained them. As Ashcroft professes, “it is these subtle and more widespread forms of resistance , forms of saying ‘no’ that are most interesting because they are most difficult for imperial powers to combat” (Ashcroft, 2001:20). The most effective form of resistance is passive resistance. Nnu Ego launches passive resistance against the system and though she eventually succumbs to stress and disappointment, her resistance leaves a mark. Nnoromele (2002:182) sees Nnu Ego “not as an object on which society heaps its ‘unfair’ practices and demands, but as a subject of her own actions, as an active determinant of her own destiny”. She earns herself a voice where patriarchy expects her to be voiceless and derides Nnaife and his supposed manhood that she exposes as weak. Nnu Ego manages to

create an economy for herself where she is expected to be moneyless. Her thrift and entrepreneurship help her to subvert the patriarchal hegemony that seeks to keep her down.

“If there is a plain feminist message in the *Joys of Motherhood*, then it is borne by the absent mother, Ona, and enacted by the junior wife, Adaku: women must, when they can, seize the right to control their lives if they and their people are to survive” (Mclean, 2003:7). This is a call for resistance which leads to the subversion of the patriarchal system and freedom. The text helps to highlight that the African women’s quest for socio-cultural and economic freedom is a protracted issue and not just a modern argument. The mindset then and the methods of expression may differ greatly from what is happening now but still it is worth noting that the quest has been there even in pre-colonial settings. It then becomes imperative to assess its development especially given the genesis of STIWANISM and Post-colonial Transformation and their impact among the African Feminists. This takes us to the next chapter that will analyse *Nervous Conditions* by Tsitsi Dangarembga and in the process draw attention to the different generations of women and the different ways they negotiate with and around patriarchy, and also assess whether they are successful in breaking the traditional boundaries.

3 CHAPTER TWO: BEYOND TRADITION

"We co-existed in peaceful detachment." (Dangarembga 1988:34)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

3.1.1 Preface

In *Nervous Conditions*, Tsitsi Dangarembga demonstrates that the assumption that African women have always been passive recipients of patriarchal oppression is misplaced. As we will observe in this chapter, many of the female characters, who belong to different social strata, are fully aware of the oppressive environment in which they find themselves and they devise resistance strategies to subvert this, albeit with varying degrees of success.

This novel is set in pre-independent Zimbabwe in the 1960s and 1970s. The story revolves around the narrator, Tambudzai, a girl who is the second born child to Jeremiah and Mai Shingayi. The eldest child and the only son when the novel begins, is Nhamo, an intelligent boy who already displays serious patriarchal tendencies from the onset. From Lucia, Mainini's wild and unfettered younger sister, we learn that Mainini was impregnated and then married at age fifteen and has lived in abject poverty ever since. Jeremiah's eldest brother, Babamukuru, a headmaster at the nearby mission school, is married to Maiguru and they have two children, Chido and Nyasha. Babamukuru, the citadel of patriarchy in this text, is the benefactor in the family and everybody looks up to him for sustenance especially Jeremiah's branch of the Sigauke family.

This text presents us with insights into the mental processes of Tambu, a young girl growing up in a society experiencing various forms of gender oppression. The situation is aggravated by the socio-economic, socio-cultural and socio-political environment prevailing during that specific period when Zimbabwe was still Rhodesia. As a woman, she is undermined and deemed inferior by the men in her immediate environment, her father, brother and uncle. This is accentuated by her mother who perpetuates the same patriarchal tendencies though she is also silently suffering from their effects.

When Tambu has to stay with Babamukuru after Nhamo's death, she experiences another life where her interaction with her heavily Anglicised cousin, Nyasha, helps the inner Tambu to

emerge. This young black African girl, Nyasha, spends her formative years in England receiving an education. This is occasioned by the scholarship that Babamukuru gets from the colonizers, to study for a Masters degree in England. Maiguru also gets the same advantage by virtue of her marriage to Babamukuru and as a result, these two, Nyasha and Maiguru, get exposed to another way of looking at things and responding to external stimuli. Since Maiguru engages in this at a slightly later stage in her life, she emerges with strong characteristics of both her African culture and the foreign one she gets exposed to. Nyasha, on the other hand, gets assimilated into another culture. Her return from England at the advent of her adolescence sees her unable to identify with her African traditions and customs, thereby bringing about some serious alienation and conflict.

As Tambu's journey unfolds, the African women's quest for socio-cultural and economic freedom, which are the key concerns of this study, will be explored.

3.1.2 The research questions

This study challenges the notion that women in Africa have always been passive, unassuming recipients of patriarchal oppression in their societies. The burden of proof is that African women have always been aware of the oppression and have always used various methods of resistance in order to subvert it. This study will show how African societies, represented in this particular text, promote the cultural and economic oppression of women. The next question is answered by looking at the strategies that Dangarembga's women characters use to subvert the cultural and economic oppression they are subjected to. Finally, I will assess the effectiveness and sustainability of the resistance strategies used by women in the text.

3.1.3 The theoretical frameworks

To answer these questions, I intend to use Bill Ashcroft's Post-colonial Transformation and Ogunjipe Morala-Leslie's STIWANISM as theoretical frameworks that inform this study. As discussed in the introduction and in the first chapter, "transformation" and "resistance" are the main tenets that I will zero in on as I read the text using the ideas put forward by Ashcroft (2001) in *Post-colonial Transformation*. In STIWANISM, I will look at the non-aggressive approach, inclusion and the complimentary aspects of the genders.

As indicated in the introduction to this study, I am adapting Ashcroft's ideas on how colonialism can be used to describe how patriarchy functions. This becomes necessary because colonialism and patriarchy use basically the same mechanism of oppression therefore ideas on colonialism would apply to patriarchy.

The sub-topic **Patriarchy as Analogous to Colonialism** will deal with this more extensively in the subsequent pages of this chapter. Ashcroft (2001:2) argues that colonialism did not destroy indigenous cultures. His argument stems from the sociological point of view that culture is not static but is dynamic and it is this dynamism of culture that has been misconstrued as the destruction of the indigenous cultures. He acknowledges the resilience and adaptability of colonial societies and further observes that the colonized cultures have often been so resilient and transformative that they have changed the nature of the imperial culture itself.

The white missionaries that mingle with Babamukuru have even given Shona names to their children. In the same vein, women have also not always been changed by men but have also transformed patriarchal structures in their communities as well. This calls for a reassessment of the stereotypical view of colonized people's victimage and lack of agency (Ashcroft, 2001:2). This buttresses the fact that women have not always been passive receptors of whatever the patriarchal system handed to them.

In his review of David Jefferess (2008) book entitled *Postcolonial Resistance: Culture, Liberation and Transformation*, Shahjahan (2011:274) observes that resistance centres on transformation through restructuring social relationships. As the women resist the socio-cultural and economic oppression they are subjected to under the patriarchal system, there is bound to be transformation which definitely has a bearing on the social relationships. As will be discussed in greater detail later, Maiguru and Tambu's resistance has transformative results on themselves and on Babamukuru as well. The relationship between Babamukuru and these two characters during the manifestation of their resistance changes so drastically that even Nyasha writes to Tambu about how Babamukuru is trying to cope with his now adamant wife.

The observation above helps to dispute the claim that it is difficult for African women to go beyond their status as victims because of their location in oppressive social systems. Frank

and Umeh (1984:41) assert that for the African woman to be free and fulfilled, she has to renounce her African identity because of the inherent sexism of traditional African culture. They further suggest that if she wishes to cherish and affirm her Africanness then she must renounce her claims to feminine independence and self-determination. It is the contention of this study, through the chosen theoretical frameworks, that African women can still enjoy their freedom and self-determination without renouncing their identity. This resonates with Broekman (1999:13) who avers that despite the fact that they retain their strong sense of identity as African women, some female characters are able to influence and alter their position and achieve varying degrees of personal liberation. This is clearly evidenced by Tambu and Maiguru in this particular text who carve out their own destinies, as will be discussed in greater detail later.

STIWANISM demands that the ground be so levelled that women are given an equal opportunity to prove their mettle in any area of human endeavour. Mainini, in defence of Tambu's quest to be given seed so that she starts her own garden resonates with this when she says: "The girl must be given a chance to do something for herself, to fail for herself" (25). STIWANISM accepts both genders and envisages complimentary roles between them. Neither should feel inferior nor even wish to be the other. After looking at her life and what society has offered her, Tambu decides that it is "comfortable to occupy the corner that the same natural process (birth) had carved out for me. It was comfortable to recognise myself as solid, utilitarian me" (40). Such assertiveness is what the patriarchal system does not condone but such is what will ensure the social transformation that includes women in Africa.

One of the sources of the resentment that Nyasha suffers from at school is her academic prowess. She beats boys at Mathematics and she does not feel inferior to them. She is a believer in individuality and feels that she must be accorded the chance to emerge as she is. She vehemently declares "I am me," and feels that society must receive her as she is and allow her to freely move towards her destiny. All this is against the dictates of the patriarchal system and this is what STIWANISM fights for. She finds it difficult to adjust to what the patriarchal system demands because it robs her of the opportunity to be herself, hence she complains that "it's difficult when everything is laid out for you. It's difficult when everything's taken care of. Even the way you think" (175). She is hereby resisting the entrapment forced on women under the patriarchal system.

The inclusion of women in social transformation as championed by STIWANISM is indeed a pertinent issue in *Nervous Conditions*. Dangarembga goes out of her way to demonstrate that it is not only men who contribute to development but women as well. A symbolic case in point is when Tambu asks Takesure (her uncle who is a live-in boyfriend of Lucia) to help her mend the kitchen roof. Such menial jobs are the main reason why his services are required at the homestead but he refuses. Tambu gets the help of a pregnant Lucia and together they mend the kitchen roof. When Babamukuru notices the change later, without thinking, he credits all to Jeremiah who shamelessly takes the credit and lies about how difficult it was to do it. This only demonstrates that given the opportunity, women have the competence and skill to contribute meaningfully to the development of society and oppressing them is depriving humanity of necessary critical human resources.

3.1.4 Chapter Prelude

In response to the questions of the study, this chapter will draw an analogy between colonialism and patriarchy. The aim is to show the deep-rooted nature of patriarchy and how it is perpetuated in this society through colonialism since colonialism also has similar repugnant oppressive tendencies. Men like Babamukuru inadvertently champion the cause of colonialism as they go about their daily patriarchal duties and it is to these tendencies that Nyasha, Tambu, Maiguru, Lucia and Mainini react from as they resist, in their different ways, the oppressive proclivity of the patriarchal system. Both colonialism and patriarchy thrive on their emphasis on binaries - black or white, educated or non-educated, young or old and male and female. In this view, children are groomed to squarely fit in these crafted roles. This then creates fertile ground for the development of stereotypes. Once the stereotypes are embedded, this brings about the entrapment of the weaker groups that are bound to suffer and end up grovelling to the supposed superior groups. I will analyse how colonialism and patriarchy have endeavoured to keep the oppressed people oppressed and how the oppressed have created avenues to circumvent the colonial and cultural boundaries.

The second part of the chapter explores in greater detail the methods that the African women in this text use to subvert and mitigate the socio-cultural and economic oppression that they are subjected to. Some choose coexistence and duality which bring stagnation to their development when they do so. This entails the acceptance of the status quo. On the other hand, others choose passive resistance which, at first, appears as if they are not worried but

eventually it yields the desired results as there is serious societal transformation. Others question and interrogate the stereotypes that have landed them serious disadvantages where they cannot fully realise their potentials. They go on to demonstrate that given a level ground, they can prove their mettle and achieve what any other human being can.

Some of the women make observations in a manner that does not align with the expectations of the patriarchal system and these observations become the basis of their resistance. These offer internal but quite effective resistance. Coupled with this, other women characters reason from an academic point of view and academic education becomes a tool for emancipation.

Some women characters explode as their way of revolting against the system. This method of resistance has its consequences and this will be discussed in greater detail. Further to this, the other characters launch a kamikaze attack on the perpetrators of the patriarchal dictates which results in implosion. These are the risk takers who attack knowing full well that they are putting their safety and survival at risk. This will again be further dealt with in greater detail in the subsequent parts of this chapter. The last part to be dealt with has to do with women who use their sexuality to subvert the cultural oppression. This study will prove that the most effective and sustainable form of resistance is subtle rather than overt and confrontational.

3.2 PATRIARCHY ANALOGOUS TO COLONIALISM

3.2.1 Preface

Where patriarchal tendencies exist in African communities, they are heightened by colonialism. The white colonial authorities have left the African men emasculated and inferior in various significant respects. As compensation for this loss of manhood, the colonized African men attempt to subjugate the women and replicate the heavy-handed treatment they receive from the white authorities. Babamukuru, the family patriarch, is heavily influenced by colonialism hence his rigid control of the family. He is among those that deify expatriates and missionaries and he expects his family members to equally bow in obeisance to him. His control permeates into the intimate marital affairs of his younger brother, Jeremiah, who in turn allows it because he is also a victim of colonial and patriarchal rule. What then baffles Babamukuru and Jeremiah is the way in which their female community, especially their daughters, resist and refuse to be cowed down. This segment of

the study examines how the society in the text enforces cultural and economic oppression of the women. Attention will also be drawn to the colonial tendencies that the male characters display inadvertently as they go about what they perceive as their normal God-ordained duties.

Tambu correctly observes that Babamukuru condones and endorses forms of gender oppression and sex-role stereotyping. She further observes that a girl child is “no more than an unfortunate by-product of some inexorable natural process...gone wrong” (40). This is the same way that the African people are viewed by the colonizer hence the analogy. Further to this, just as the missionaries decide to develop Babamukuru in the direction they deem suitable for him, Tambu can tell already that she is “going to be developed in the way that Babamukuru saw fit” (59). Her fate is thus sealed and if she accepts it as it comes, she is not going to be anything more than what Babamukuru sees as her future.

3.2.2 The binaries

Both colonialism and patriarchy thrive on binaries. Ashcroft (2001:21) avers that the most tenacious aspect of colonial control has been its capacity to bind the colonized into a binary myth. Underlying all colonial discourse is a binary of colonizer/colonized, civilized/uncivilized, white/black. In the colonial context, this is essential for economic and political exploitation. In concurrence with this, Shahjahan proposes the first face of resistance which he names the cultural resistance framework. This hinges on cultural assumptions and binary thoughts underlying the colonial narrative (Shahjahan 2011:275). Translated into the patriarchal sense, it will be the male/female binary whose aim is to perpetuate the socio-cultural and economic oppression of women. This distinction introduced by the binaries determines how people relate to each other. It stratifies society and highlights strict boundaries which cannot easily be crossed, hence the separation of residential areas, academic institutions, recreational facilities and even the transport system. Colonialism also emphasises the divide between the haves and the have-nots.

Tambu remembers their family history as told by her grandmother. She is told that at the farm where her grandmother had been left by her grandfather, the white wizard had no use for women and children hence the expulsion of the grandmother and her children from the farm. By so doing, the colonizer has already emphasised the existing patriarchal binary of male/female. However, when her grandmother takes Babamukuru to the missionaries, the

“holy wizards-” “thought he was a good boy, cultivatable, in the way that land is, to yield harvests that sustain the cultivator” (19). This then shows that the benevolence is not intended for the benefit of the beneficiary but of the benefactor. This is exactly the same way that patriarchal societies view the girl-child. She is brought up so that the father may get cattle by way of the bride price charged when her hand is asked for in marriage.

Even in terms of intellect, the colonizers established binaries of the intelligent and the late-bloomers. The blacks are the ones who are supposed to be the late bloomers whilst the whites are the normal ones. Nhamo is said to have been the youngest in his class owing to some parents’ belief that the Africans “really were a retarded lot” (13). This echoes what they heard from the colonizers. Nhamo, at a later stage, displays the same attitude as he boasts to Tambu after her expression of interest to go to school. “It’s the same everywhere. Because you are a girl (21)...Did you ever hear a girl being taken away to school? You are lucky you even managed to go back to Rutivi. With me it’s different. I was meant to be educated” (49). The colonial mentality of the binaries is evident here.

Babamukuru and Jeremiah, because of their belief in the binaries of the patriarchal system, discuss and conclude that Nhamo should stay with Babamukuru without consulting their wives. They only announce their decision as the superior members of the male/female binary. The same happens when they decide that Tambu should go to Sacred Heart to further her education. Mainini only hears of it from Tambu herself because her husband and brother-in-law do not see it fit to involve her in such a fate-determining decision.

When Babamukuru decides to stay with Nhamo, he gathers the family and when Nhamo dies, he gathers the family again with the intention of announcing his decision to take Tambu so that she replaces Nhamo in the academic pursuit. Whilst Babamukuru can easily remember Nhamo’s name, he stammers in both instances when it comes to Tambu’s name. In the first instance he says “Nhamo and heyo-er, this girl-er, Tambudzai” (46) and in the second instance he says “Er-this girl-heyo, Tambudzai” (56). This inadvertently undermines Tambu and emphasises her inferiority especially given the status and stature of Babamukuru in the family and how they are related. To him, she is just “this girl!” whose identity he has to struggle to remember. In the same manner, the colonizers would not call a worker in their house by name but would always call him a “boy”, no matter what age.

Jeremiah fails to raise money for his daughter Tambudzai's tuition fees but she devises a plan to get money. When he gets to know that the money is kept at the school, he challenges both the teacher and the headmaster by saying "that money belongs to me. Tambudzai is my daughter, is she not?" (30). In his mind, Tambu being a child, especially a girl, cannot own anything, particularly such a huge amount of money. It is the man, himself who must own it.

Because of his adherence to the binaries of patriarchy, Babamukuru fails to understand his daughter Nyasha and wants to control the smallest detail of her life. He feels that since he is the man in the house, any deviation from what he says is tantamount to rebellion. Nyasha does not want to eat much food but because Babamukuru feels that she belongs to the inferior side of the binary, he feels his authority challenged when she refuses to eat. Just as the blacks wait on the whites, he feels Nyasha and everybody else must do the same and when Nyasha decides otherwise, he protests. He even makes reference to his wife who waits on him. He does not bother to get to the bottom of the story but utters statements like "I expect you to do as I say," "If I as a head of the family" (85).

After he has had an altercation with Nyasha, his main concern is that they cannot have two men in the house. Instead of facing the problem and trying to solve it, he is more worried about entrenching himself in his masculine pride. A bewildered Nyasha sees her father's obsession with the binaries and says "That's how it comes out, but really it's things about boys and men and being decent and indecent and good and bad...traditions and expectations and authority" (193). Colonialism and the patriarchal system use binaries as weapons of oppression. Mainini aptly sums it up when she says "these days it is worse, with the poverty of blackness on one side and the weight of womanhood on the other" (16).

3.2.3 Socialisation

The African patriarchal family constitutes the basic unit for instilling discipline, social order and the general socializing of children. In view of the binaries earlier discussed, the family unit is used to cement the predetermined position of the male and female members so that each grows without interfering with the route of the other. The male child has all the advantages waiting for him whereas the female child does not have much since she will soon leave and join another family through marriage. The male child is groomed to be superior whilst the girl child is made aware of her supposed inferiority by virtue of her gender. Grooming as a patriarchal tool of oppression ensures that the males thrive without much of a

challenge from the females. When this is upset, it sends the male characters in *Nervous Conditions* into shock and disbelief because they are not groomed for any challenge from the women.

As a result of this grooming, Nhamo develops a terrible attitude towards the female gender. He does not like to ride the bus from the mission school to his home because the female passengers “smell of unhealthy reproductive odours” but the men give off “strong aromas of productive labour” (1). Though for both men and women he describes heavy smells repulsive to him, the female ones are “unhealthy odours” whilst the male ones are “aromas.” The female ones are “reproductive” whilst the male ones are “productive.”

As Tambu narrates the house chores, it is evident that the chores are gender specific. She and Netsai, her younger sister, only have to herd cattle because “there was no other young man in the family besides Nhamo to attend to this chore” (8). Nhamo has been groomed to believe that “minding children was not a man’s duty” (9).

At times Nhamo leaves his luggage at the shops and then the girls have to fetch it. Tambu correctly observes that he does this, not because it is heavy, but simply “to demonstrate to us and to himself that he had the power and authority to make us do things for him” (10). When they are discussing Nhamo’s relocation to the mission, Nhamo callously displays his veiled perception of the fate of the girl-child according to what he has been groomed to believe: “Did you ever hear of a girl being taken away to school? With me it’s different. I was meant to be educated” (49). Tambu goes on to exonerate Nhamo by saying his nasty sexist behaviour is not because he simply chooses to be obnoxious but in “reality, he is doing no more than behave, perhaps extremely, in the expected manner” (12). It becomes expected because that is what society has groomed him to be. On her part, Tambu observes that the needs of the women in her family are not “considered a priority, or even legitimate” (12). These are some of the effects of grooming and it is meant to keep the women in their hewn out places of inferiority.

When Tambu meritoriously earns the privilege to go to Sacred Heart, a Roman Catholic elite school, Babamukuru holds a discussion with her where he wants her to see and appreciate that enough chances have come her way already hence she should give room to others. This comes after her mother has given birth to a baby boy and, according to Babamukuru, since he

is the only boy in Tambu's family, he must be provided for. He has already started saving for the infant but this is in spite of the fact that there is already Netsai who must also be planned for. Because Netsai is a girl, nothing is done for her and because Tambu is a girl, she must stop her education now in order to give room to her infant brother. This has serious psychological consequences on her. She is supposed to understand this since she has been groomed into such a system that condones such segregation but she questions it. Such grooming leads to yet another patriarchal vice that is used to oppress women culturally and economically, namely stereotyping.

3.2.4 Stereotypes

Sexual stereotyping is another tool that is used by the patriarchal system in this text in order to promote the cultural and economic oppression of African women. It is also a reflection of the racial stereotyping that the males suffer at the mercy of colonialism.

When Jeremiah fails to raise school fees for the children due to his improvidence, the children have to drop out of school. Mainini does all she can to raise school fees but only for Nhamo and not for Tambu. When she shows her desire for education, Jeremiah wonders why she should even be worried, especially given that she is just a girl. The best advice that he gives her is to stay at home, learn to cook and grow vegetables, for these are the stereotypical gender roles prescribed for the females by the patriarchal system. He even asks whether she can cook books and feed them to her husband. It is as if this is what women are known for, what they are best at. To cement his resolve, Jeremiah reprimands Tambu for reading newspapers because he feels that her mind will fill up with stuff that will make her "quite useless for the real tasks of feminine living" (34).

Even at Babamukuru's homecoming, though she desires to be part and parcel of the entourage that goes to the airport to receive him, she cannot because she is a girl. When Jeremiah sees the yearning on her face, he takes her aside and implores her to curb her "unnatural inclinations" (34) since it is natural for her to stay at home and prepare for the homecoming. Going to the airport is deemed too adventurous for a woman.

The commercialization of women is another tool that the patriarchal system uses to keep women under the control of men. As Mainini's family is being discussed, it is believed that it

was a blessing that the first two children were girls so that they would bring cattle through the bride price.

In some pockets of this society, women are not considered as people who can reason or who understand issues discussed verbally. They are deemed to understand violence only if one wants to make them understand that it is justifiable to beat them up. Babamukuru administers corporal punishment on both Tambu and Nyasha to make them understand that he is in charge. On top of that, he is involved in a physical fight with Nyasha as his way of communicating with her what he thinks she fails to understand verbally. In a separate incident, when Nhamo steals Tambu's maize cobs and she discovers it, she charges at him and wrestles him to the ground and a fight ensues. One of the onlookers shouts "Just hit her. That's what they hear" (23). This is a highly stereotypical statement that demonstrates this point. It is used in an attempt to show women where they should be and to keep them there.

Single middle-aged women are associated with evil because society expects them to be married. Mainini has lost four babies in their infancy and as per cultural belief, this cannot just happen without wilful external meddling. Before people have even exhausted the available traditional or medical resources to establish the cause, Lucia is accused of witchcraft. She is so accused because she has passed her prime. Given the binaries, the grooming and the stereotypes, the victims of the patriarchal system are then ushered into entrapment.

3.2.5 Entrapment

The colonizers offer seemingly attractive packages to the colonized so that the process of entrapment can be easy. The African will feel obliged to obey and stick around in order to please the benefactor. This is a method used even currently by the super powers who offer economic structural adjustment programmes to poor African countries with hook-in-worm incentives. Once the African countries have swallowed the bait, they are entrapped in a vicious cycle that will see them perpetually indebted to the super powers whilst at the same time losing much in terms of revenue. Babamukuru is a direct beneficiary of such and is entrapped culturally, religiously, academically and socially. He uses the same tactic, unawares and almost wins his battle over Maiguru and Nyasha. These are momentarily entrapped though they resist and escape.

Maiguru, in spite of her exposure and all the education that she has acquired, is so entrapped that she does not know what happens to her salary. She desires also to drive, just like any other working woman, but momentarily she appears content with playing a secondary role where her salary is concerned. This indeed is colonialism colluding with patriarchy because it is the expectation of both and there is anomaly as far as both systems are concerned. When challenged by her daughter to learn how to drive, Maiguru asks “Where do you think I would get the car from? Do you think I can afford to buy one?” (104). A working class woman, with a Master’s degree can definitely afford one if she really wants it. She is in a marital trap hence she cannot independently decide to do anything with the money that she earns because she does not control it. Patriarchy would dictate that.

Babamukuru is entrapped because of a scholarship that he is a beneficiary of and the same happens to his son Chido. On his part, he applies the same thing to Tambu over whom he wishes to have absolute control, thereby entrapping her. Nyasha observes it whilst she is in one of her psychological trances and says once one gets used to being in the trap, it just seems natural and one just carries on “and that’s the end of you. You’re trapped. They control everything you do” (119).

Beneficiaries are usually the ones that fall into traps. Mainini receives provisions from Babamukuru on a monthly basis. Her two children are taken and educated by Babamukuru. In that sense, she is bound to feel that she owes him. It is this sense that brings about the entrapment because, though she may have misgivings about other issues, she is robbed of all power because she is trapped. Mainini does not want Tambu to stay with Babamukuru but she is not strong enough to resist. Mainini does not want Tambu to go to Sacred Heart but again, she is entrapped and is rendered voiceless. This is reminiscent of the time when Babamukuru is offered the England scholarship. He is torn between going and not going, leaving his children behind or taking them. Because of the entrapment, the thought of not going is a non issue as it will be a show of ingratitude to the benefactors.

3.2.6 Summary of analysis

The discussion above shows that in as much as colonialism has kept the colonized under oppression, patriarchy has equally done the same. The above does not in any way suggest that colonialism brought about patriarchy but rather cemented the tendencies that were there already. In the same vein, just as the colonized could see how and where they were

oppressed, the women also have always seen and resisted socio-cultural and economic oppression. These analogous tools of oppression namely patriarchy and colonialism function in virtually the same manner. They both emphasise the existence of the binaries and thereby stratify society by so doing. This then makes it easier for them to control the part that is deemed weaker. They then groom society into accepting these binaries and in the process create stereotypes to their advantage. Once the stereotypes are set, this ensures the entrapment of their victims.

In a nutshell, this is how the community promotes cultural and economic oppression of women. The women, as aforementioned, do not take this oppression lying down. They offer various forms of resistance and these are the ones that will be discussed in the next segment.

3.3 RESISTANCE

3.3.1 Preface

The women in *Nervous Conditions* are subjected to various forms of oppression that are aimed at curbing and stagnating their development and usefulness. The community, through verbal interaction, psychologically prepares the girl-child for marriage. They make insinuations that are aimed at ensuring that she sees nothing else in her future but a husband and a house full of children. The young women in the text resist this and insist on pursuing their own dreams. They also make it a point to emphasise that their lives will not evolve around marriage since there are other immediate pursuits like education to be followed. The elderly women also launch their own forms of resistance which bear fruit.

The forms of resistance advocated in Ashcroft (2001) will be examined here. There are other forms of resistance offered that will still be examined in this segment as well. I will discuss coexistence and duality as forms of resistance launched by some of the women in this text. I will also look at how they react to stereotypical behaviour or utterances displayed or uttered by both male and female characters. In the face of patriarchal oppression, some of the characters react openly, reminiscent of an explosion, thereby offering overt resistance. The process and results will be discussed as well. Other characters launch a kamikaze attack which results in implosion and this will be dealt with as well. The last form of resistance will be discussed under sexuality. It will be discovered that some characters offer different types of resistance at different times and in different situations.

3.3.2 Coexistence and duality

This type of resistance ensures that there is peace in the community and people agree to disagree. However, even in such circumstances, it is difficult to achieve a win-win outcome. In a patriarchal environment, when coexistence is opted for, it is normally the weaker and more reasonable that choose to lie low but still ensure that their inclinations are known. This is covert or subtle or passive resistance which has no or minimal verbal or physical contact.

Nyasha, on two occasions, becomes indignant when the elderly talk about her and not to her, in her presence. At first, it is with her previous headmaster, Mr. Satombo, and though she does not say or do anything in protest, her indignation shows and it upsets her father. This affects the mood of the whole trip back to the mission school. Nyasha does not want to be referred to in the third person in her presence. When the family is gathered, they teasingly discuss her marriage prospects and though again she does not say or do anything, she shows her resistance to being groomed for marriage in this way. Her argument is that “the question of her marriage was a personal one which she would look into when she felt moved to” (133). This is serious resistance because the patriarchal system gives the elderly charge over the marriage process right from birth. It allows the family to groom girl-children for that inevitable role and when the family feels it is time, it is the family that takes the initiative.

After the physical fight with her father, Nyasha decides not to resist and declares to Tambu that she is “getting comfortable and used to the way things are.” She decides to withdraw into herself as her father also withdraws out of the house. Tambu notices that Nyasha is retreating into “some private world” (120) that they cannot reach. Even when she does not want to go home for Christmas and her father objects, she does not resist, getting the satisfaction that her inclinations are known.

Maiguru, about whom Tambu says “it was unusual for her to grumble” (124), is another character who chooses when to offer passive resistance. At the time when Babamukuru is giving Tambu one of his long lectures, Maiguru sits through making soft assenting noises at the back of her throat thereby giving Babamukuru the impression that she is in full agreement. When he is about to conclude, he turns to her and Tambu observes that her body language as she sits “with her arms folded and staring detachedly into invisible distances” communicates her disinterest in the subject at hand and the manner of presentation. (89).

Even with the full knowledge of the type of dress her husband doesn't want Nyasha to wear, Maiguru goes ahead and buys that for her daughter to wear at the school's Christmas dance. Tambu observes that she appears and innocently asks Babamukuru whether he is proud of his fine-looking daughter and announces that she has bought her the dress for working so hard at her exams. This makes it abundantly clear that she is opposed to her husband's stringent and inflexible rules and tastes and by so doing, she has made her statement already in a non-aggressive manner.

When the men are gathered and discussing the Takesure and Lucia issue, Babamukuru does not invite Maiguru officially and when she signals to leave, that is when he says she has to sit since they were listening to a very important case. Instead of complaining directly, she simply asks "Could it be that important? We did not know anything about it" (145). Though she sits and then is excused by Tete, her point that she must not be by-passed when the family has such important issues is registered.

After dropping out of school due to lack of funds, Tambu devises a plan and eventually gets money for her school fees. Her father fights tooth and nail to get access to that money and also to discourage her from showing interest in education or in acquiring knowledge even from newspapers. When Tambu looks at her situation, she concludes that she will never understand her father and therefore sees it fit that they "co-exist in peaceful detachment" (34). This is the pinnacle of coexistence and duality. These are mutually exclusive people who by virtue of family obligations have to live under one roof. Through this type of resistance, she manages to get back to school, setting the pace for her future.

When Babamukuru suggests that Tambu's parents wed in order to exorcise the evil spirits invited by their deemed sinful cohabitation, she does not like the idea. At first she uses pretence and everybody thinks she likes the idea. However, her reasoning goes beyond that. Tambu feels that the wedding reduces her parents to stars in a comic show. She feels it will make a mockery of the people she belongs to and also place doubt on her "legitimate existence on earth" (165). However, she does not make much noise about it but simply tells Babamukuru that she does not want to attend the wedding. He rants and raves and verbally insists that she is going but she remains quiet and resolute and wins Maiguru's support. Eventually, she is left behind. She scores her victory in passive resistance which is reminiscent of Mahatma Ghandi's passive resistance.

Tambu observes so much injustice in the way Babamukuru treats Nyasha especially after the infamous fight between Nyasha and Babamukuru. She observes that all conflicts between Nyasha and Babamukuru always come back to the question of femaleness and it is always “femaleness as opposed and inferior to maleness” (118). Instead of standing up and challenging this, she decides to take “refuge in the image of the grateful poor female relative” (118). This helps her to keep within acceptable boundaries that will ensure that she stays and finishes her education. This makes her stay easier and she quips that by keeping these boundaries, she is able to avoid the mazes of self-confrontation. This choice of duality and coexistence as forms of resistance facilitates and guarantees her stay and continued education which is her mainstay and passion.

In the same manner, when she suspects that she may fall into the same trap that Nyasha is in, she employs another form of resistance which is her ability to banish her suspicions and bury them in the depth of her subconscious (208). This is what gives her the strength to go back to Sacred Heart in spite of all the fears that Nyasha’s psychological demise has conjured up in her.

3.3.3 Stereotypes, observations and academic reasoning

Chambers (1991), as quoted in Ashcroft (2001:31), indicates that “reading is an important, and fruitful, aspect of the resistance process. The consumption of culture can be so tied up with its production that it becomes a transformative species of resistance.” The academic experience, to which some of the female characters in this text are exposed, becomes a tool for resistance with transformative powers. Nyasha is one female character who defies all forms of stereotypes and this is chiefly due to the exposure she receives when she goes abroad. She has an “egalitarian nature that has taken seriously the lessons about oppression and discrimination” (64).

While others, male and female, are engrossed in the male/female superiority debate, she prefers reality and insists that she must get the facts if she is to find solutions to universal problems like territorial conflicts among nations. All this defies the dictates of the patriarchal system which takes problem-solving as the preserve of males. It has failed to confine her academically since she pursues supposedly unwomanly academic subjects like war, international conflicts and current affairs of the country such as the Unilateral Declaration of Independence by Ian Smith, then Prime Minister of Rhodesia.

When her mother, Maiguru, protests and goes away from home, Nyasha does not crumble as expected, given her gender and age. She reasons and weighs issues and concludes that it is better for Maiguru to go. She is able to tell the difference between abandoning her children and saving herself. "Consequently, she thought only in terms of her mother's emancipation and was comforted by it" (176). In Shona culture, this reasoning does not tally with a girl of that age and in that setting.

Tambu, the principal protagonist, uses academic reasoning and critical observations to resist the oppression by the patriarchal order. Before and during her stay with Nyasha, Tambu is also aware and critical of stereotypes. She vocalises her concerns after observing that though Maiguru is a woman, she is educated and does not serve her husband books for dinner as suggested by her father when he tries to discourage her from pursuing education.

Tambu is "acutely aware of how others see her and what they expect of her, and this knowledge is often in direct conflict with how she sees and feels about herself" (Anderson, 2010:4). When in dire straits Tambu says she uses her "thinking strategy" which she is very proud of. She takes time to deliberately build up her "defences" and confesses that after doing that, "I triumphed. I was not seduced" (70). This indeed is a tool she uses against patriarchal oppression. Tambu's upbringing is set to tie her down to village life because this is all she has known. However, she uses her critical thinking once she gets exposed to the outside world and questions why Babamukuru is so obsessed with the rural homestead when there really is nothing tangible for him there. She justifies her love for the village because at least her parents are there. Such reasoning is indeed a form of resistance against forced loyalty to the "home" concept.

3.3.4 Overt Resistance-The Explosion

Ashcroft (2001) also discusses overt resistance which he deems as unproductive as it puts the disadvantaged, who usually is the one resisting, into the place where the one who is advantaged wants. He says, "resistance which ossifies into simple opposition often becomes trapped in the very binary which imperial discourse uses to keep the colonized in subjection" (Ashcroft, 2001:21). He goes on to say the answer to a myth of force is not necessarily counterforce, which is exactly what overt resistance is. At some points in the text, some of the women characters use overt resistance with predicted consequences but some of them score victory after using it and both sides will be explored.

Nyasha exhibits this type of resistance even over seemingly mundane issues like feeding, waiting on her father and reading. Though she is fully aware of the standing family rule that nobody should serve food before Babamukuru is done, at one point, she starts by serving herself. When Babamukuru questions her, she retorts that she does not like cold food. Even as she answers, she is also breaking yet another standing family rule of not answering back to her father. All she sees in her father is the image of the colonizer. On the same table, she notices the disappearance of her D.H. Lawrence novel she is reading and challenges the elders about it. When reminded of another standing rule that forbids her to read such books, she explodes about the unfairness and the infringement of her rights. She gets so upset that she decides not to eat anymore. When her father forces her to continue eating, she storms out of the room. All this does not yield any positive results for her as it further alienates her from her father and affects the general mood in the family.

After a church service, Nyasha again displays this type of resistance when, much to the chagrin of her father, she questions a Christian principle of rendering unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar. Her argument is that if it is Caesar who determines what belongs to him then the whole issue is unfair since Caesar can eventually take everything. Even men in this setting do not dare challenge that because Biblical concepts are considered pure and questioning them is tantamount to rebelling against the missionaries who are their benefactors.

Maiguru is another character who uses the same type of resistance in the text. Her explosion, unlike Nyasha's, produces some positive results though not at the speed she anticipates. Initially she explodes about Babamukuru's inability to fix windows at the home, the supposed manly task. This however, is done in Babamukuru's absence but is a sign of potential revolt. Another imminent explosion is seen when Tambu tells her that everybody says she went to England only to look after Babamukuru. She snorts in an ironic and sarcastic manner, "and what do you expect? Why should a woman go all that way and put up with all those problems if not to look after her husband?" (102). Again, in the absence of Babamukuru, this is said in protest to the patriarchal order which turns a blind eye to her usefulness and academic achievements.

Maiguru first directly confronts Babamukuru when Lucia complains about the punishment imposed on Tambu after she refuses to attend her parents' wedding. Though Maiguru does

not like Lucia's approach, she agrees with her argument and says so to Babamukuru. For the first time, she finds a voice and exercises her right to air an opinion. She chooses her pronouns well to demonstrate her point "my" money, "your" family, "my" relatives, "my" house. She also uses abrasive language that shocks Babamukuru. Initially, she describes the Jeremiah-Mainini wedding as a "ridiculous wedding." This must have come as a shock to Babamukuru who must have believed that all along his wife was in agreement with his arrangement. She goes on to say she "is tired of"- her house being a hotel for his family/ being a housekeeper for them/being nothing in a home she is working herself sick to support. She then declares "I am sick of it Baba waChido. Let me tell you, I have had enough." (174). She says that if she keeps quiet it does not show that she is happy and all this shows bottled-up emotions that have now exploded. This is a type of resistance that the colonialists and patriarchy often are not prepared for and do not know how to handle. When Maiguru expresses that she is not happy in the house, Babamukuru is bereft of any solution except to tell her to go where she will be happy. His only hope is that as a decent married woman, she cannot dare go against the cultural expectation to stay and persevere in a difficult marriage. Maiguru launches what Nyasha calls a "one-woman show" (176) and goes away from home, not secretly but in broad daylight. This show is another overt resistance that has tangible results because as soon as Babamukuru gets to know where she is, he does not waste time but goes to persuade her, then brings her back. Her statement has been made.

After the incident above, Maiguru again shows that she finally has something to say after Babamukuru has spoken for a long time about how Tambu cannot go to Sacred Heart mission. In her rendition, she becomes quite explicit, against cultural expectations, about the looseness ascribed to educated women and Babamukuru winces at that. She shares her disappointment in that there are still people who believe in the same notion even in the seventies and this is in apparent reference to Babamukuru and his patriarchal lot. She is quite categorical in her arguments and Babamukuru is left with nothing else to say and he fails to conclude the Sacred Heart issue, a thing he usually could have done without any hesitation. Maiguru's protest and overt resistance is beginning to bear fruit. Again, in an apparent protest against being used by the family, she refuses to spend that Christmas at home and prefers to be driven to the mission daily. Again, this is in apparent protest to her "kitchenless state" (185) that arises from Babamukuru's unilateral decision to cede their house and Maiguru's Dover Stove to Jeremiah and wife as a wedding present.

Lucia is another explosive character who achieves much by using this form of resistance. She is known for her stubbornness and outspokenness and Babamukuru says she is like a man. By this he means that she exhibits unwomanly characteristics in violation of and resistance to cultural expectations. In agreement with Babamukuru's observations, Takesure says "We need a good strategy to outsmart that woman. She is vicious and unnatural. She is uncontrollable" (148). Lucia confronts her situation and unlike other women represented by her sister, who are satisfied with marriage as a destination, Lucia looks for a job and finds it. Again, she does not want to remain illiterate. She sees a future in education and so, in spite of her age and pregnancy, she enrolls for Grade One and does so well that she is made to skip to Grade Three. This is a woman who has refused to be cowed down by the oppressive dictates of patriarchy.

Lucia is one of the beneficiaries of Babamukuru's supposed kindness in that above all that he has done for her, he has facilitated her getting a job. However, this does not gag her and neither does it make her grovel to Babamukuru. When she feels that Tambu has been unfairly punished, she is not afraid of confronting Babamukuru about this and tells him frankly what is in her heart. It is her outburst that triggers Maiguru's overt resistance as well.

Mainini also has her moments of overt resistance. When the senior family members are gathered to discuss the Takesure-Lucia issue, she voices her concern about the unfairness of the judiciary system where Lucia is being tried in absentia. She is joined by Mainini Patience who also agrees and adds that she feels as if women are being taken like children since real issues are hidden from them. Mainini does not like Babamukuru's decision to allow Tambu to go to Sacred Heart and she protests vehemently against that. She says she is tired of Babamukuru dividing her from her children and ruling her life. Also, she voices her displeasure at Babamukuru's control of her life. It is at this point that she also bursts out against the arranged wedding she was forced to go through saying: "To wear a veil, at my age, to wear a veil! Just imagine-to wear a veil" (187). Though this is in Babamukuru's absence, it is overt resistance all the same. Mainini again bursts out against what she terms "Englishness" (207). This outburst, though directed at Babamukuru, becomes of great benefit to Tambu when she goes to Sacred Heart Mission because she guards herself against being affected by the Englishness.

3.3.5 Kamikaze Resistance – The Implosion

The kamikaze resistance has similarities with overt resistance, the only difference being that in the kamikaze resistance, the person who resists knows that they will not succeed and may even die in the process. The kamikaze resistance is implosive and leads to self-destruction. Mainini is one such character who launches a kamikaze resistance to the patriarchal order.

This is first manifest when Babamukuru offers to stay with Tambu. She does not like it and she decides to starve herself. It gets so bad that when Tambu leaves, Mainini is “so haggard and gaunt she can hardly walk to the fields, let alone work in them” (57). Mainini reacts even worse when she learns that Tambu will be going to Sacred Heart, a mission school known for its “Englishness.” At this particular instance, she feigns paralysis and this threatens both herself and her new baby’s health. The baby develops diarrhoea because of the unhygienic conditions he is exposed to. This is deliberate and implosive as it has the potential to kill both mother and child. They are saved by Lucia’s timely intervention.

Nyasha also launches a kamikaze attack with worse consequences than Mainini’s. Hers grows slowly but surely and harms her body and soul in a very big way. At first, she vents her frustration with her father through smoking. Apart from the medical effects this has on her body, she risks terrible consequences should she be discovered by her parents, particularly her father. By nature of diffusion, it should have been quite easy for her parents to detect cigarette smoke since we are not told that either of them smoke.

Her second kamikaze resistance is her refusal to eat until her bones begin to creep to the surface. As the frequency of her confrontation with her father increases and she is forced to eat, she becomes bulimic. She finishes her food in front of her parents and quickly rushes to vomit it. This has disastrous effects on her as she loses the necessary gut juices. This has the potential to kill her. She does not end there but goes ahead and becomes anorexic. Her anorexia nervosa then affects her so much that she develops mental and psychological problems that really affect her social, academic and family life. She is eventually taken to a psychologist. All this shows the suicidal effects of kamikaze resistance.

When Nyasha delays to come back home after the Christmas dance, her father who is obviously furious, challenges her to explain her delay. Because of the mistrust that already exists between them, Babamukuru accuses her of having engaged in sexual activity. In her

defence, she launches kamikaze resistance by declaring "I was doing it, whatever you're talking about" (115). When he calls her a whore, she again asks him why she should worry herself about what people would say when her own father calls her a whore. This verbal retaliation is something that is tantamount to suicide for nobody in the family dares argue with or go against Babamukuru in this manner. Babamukuru feels he is disciplining his child when he beats her up. Nyasha, however, feels that he has no right to hit her and in a kamikaze move, she punches him in the eye. This has obvious disastrous consequences as this turns into a brawl where there is a pre-determined loser. This is a self-defeating move that she carries out fully aware of the consequences.

3.3.6 Sexuality

The patriarchal order has set standards about sexuality. Promiscuity is only a vice if it is practised by women hence the institutionalization of polygamy. Talk about sex or sex-related issues is also considered taboo. Some women characters resist this. Nyasha introduces Tambu to the use of tampons during menstruation and the discussion that ensues is contrary to what is expected of girls culturally. When Tambu quizzes Nyasha about the "offensively shaped object," (97) Nyasha quips that she is better off losing her virginity to a tampon which would not gloat over it than to a man who would add hers to a hoard of hymens. Besides the subject being taboo, her desire of denying a man the opportunity to take away her virginity is indeed contrary to her culture.

Lucia, who is described as wild, is another character who defies the sexuality boundaries set by the patriarchal order. She is not married but determines when to have sex and with whom. She also choose when to be pregnant and by whom. Though she cannot quite be described as a prostitute, her promiscuity is indeed a fracture in the cultural boundaries. She has had several men in her life and there is even debate as to who is responsible for her pregnancy between Jeremiah and Takesure. This is clear evidence that she has slept with both men in spite of the fact that Jeremiah is her sister's husband and Takesure is already a polygamist. She is described as a woman of "fecund appetites" who has calculated, for economic advantage, who the father of her baby must be. She vehemently rejects Takesure but because her body has "appetites of which she is not ashamed," (155) she moves back in with Takesure. She does not give any excuse for herself but goes on to say "A woman has to live with something, even if it is only a cockroach" (155). She shows here that she is the one in

control of her sexuality and destiny. She uses her power of choice and is not ashamed of her sexuality.

3.4 CONCLUSION

This analysis of *Nervous Conditions* has shown that the patriarchal African communities, here represented by the Zimbabwean society, use several methods to ensnare women and keep them from exploring possibilities and opportunities. This has many disadvantages to the development of Africa as it denies Africa the skills that women possess. Patriarchal African communities have many similarities with the colonial system and some of them get enhanced in their resolve to keep women oppressed. They emphasise the binaries which then create stereotypes. Because of the stereotypes, children are groomed to follow prescribed paths which then lead to the entrapment of girls in adulthood.

African women, it has been observed, have not always been passive recipients of the patriarchal influences; they have, on the contrary, been aware of their oppression and have always resisted it. The various methods of resistance, as postulated by Ashcroft (2001) have been interrogated. The need to allow women to be included in the transformation of Africa, as demanded by STIWANISM has been validated. African women continue to resist and subvert oppression as they seek socio-cultural and economic emancipation from the clutches of patriarchy. So much has been achieved and much more can still be achieved. Other issues and modes of resistance will be explored in the next chapter as the mutation of oppression and resistance will be explored in an analysis of *The Uncertainty of Hope* by Valerie Tagwira.

4 CHAPTER THREE: ROUTES AND STUMBLING BLOCKS TO SOCIO-ECONOMIC PARITY

“She struck a forceful blow against all the Gariis of the world and against everything that threatened her existence....She cried about the poverty that had left her crushed and hopeless, about everything that rendered her powerless, everything that held her bound in chains...”

(Tagwira, 2006:142)

4.1 THE PREAMBLE

The last two chapters looked at how culture seeks to suppress women in the socio-economic arena. The striking similarities between colonialism and patriarchy were also identified and demonstrated as the texts were read through the lens of Bill Ashcroft's Post-colonial Transformation. The patriarchal system tried to muzzle the women but in the preceding chapters, it became abundantly clear that there was never a point when African women were not aware that they were oppressed by the system. It also emerged that African women have always sought socio-economic and socio-cultural emancipation to achieve socio-economic parity. They have always employed subtle and covert strategies to free themselves. This buttresses the STIWANIST call for non-confrontational approach in the quest for socio-economic parity. The women's successes, however, have been minimal because of the double oppression of both patriarchy and colonialism, as has been seen already.

This chapter analyses *The Uncertainty of Hope*, a post-independence text set in Zimbabwe, hence anticipates a more empowered African woman who achieves better success at circumventing the dominance of patriarchy. Collins (1991:7) observes that “people who are oppressed usually know it”. The chapter interrogates whether society still perceives women as passive, clueless victims of the patriarchal order. An analysis of how patriarchy oppresses African women will be carried out as well. The chapter seeks to establish how male dominance ‘sexualises’ men and women from a young age. Stereotypes about both men and women will be identified as reflected in the society represented here. These will be looked at with a view to

establish how they lead to the misogyny and hyper-masculinity which have birthed the scourges of rape and domestic violence in society. The colonial binary still has a serious bearing in this part of the study though the setting is twenty years after the end of colonial rule in Zimbabwe. It is apparent here that at the time the text is set, men, just like the coloniser, are still privileged by the system thereby bringing a disparity between the genders. This then justifies the STIWANIST call for the inclusion of women in Africa if we are to achieve genuine social transformation. Emecheta, in Petersen (1988), adds voice to this by saying “working and achieving to great heights is nothing new to the woman of Africa...The African woman has always been a woman who achieves” (Emecheta, 1988:179).

Women’s resistance in the text brings insightful observations that buttress the causes of both STIWANISM and post-colonial resistance as will be discussed. As Ashcroft (2001:21) avers, “the answer to the myth of force is not necessarily counterforce.” Women in this text offer resistance to male domination which is largely non-confrontational and in many cases quite subtle. A case in point is how Tagwira cleverly juxtaposes both men and women’s resistance in the face of the state-sponsored violence code-named Operation Murambatsvina. Overall, the results and effectiveness of women’s resistance will also be assessed as reflected by the characters.

Tagwira’s female characters represent a cross-section of Zimbabwean women from market vendors, black market dealers, the single university students, medical doctors, prostitutes and even high school students. These women endeavour to define themselves beyond the cultural and societal designation of ‘respectable and obedient’ women. To a large extent and in varying degrees, these women chart their own destiny much to the chagrin of retrogressive masculinities that perceive such actions as usurpation of their perceived advantaged positions.

4.1.1 Synopsis of the text

The novel is set in independent Zimbabwe in the year 2005 at the height of the socio-economic and socio-political crisis that birthed Operation Murambatsvina, a state-occasioned move that wrought immense suffering among the Zimbabwean populace. Loosely translated, Operation Murambatsvina means “Operation reject filth”. Operation Murambatsvina targeted illegal

structures, especially in the high density areas of the cities. Such structures ranged from vending stalls, self-help small scale manufacturing industries and shanty dwellings to houses built outside official municipal plans (Nyambi, 2012:3). The government's statistics indicated that 569,685 people or 133,534 households were subject to such displacement (Tibaijuka, 2005:32).

In the text, the focus is largely on the effects of the operation in Mbare, Harare. Women and children are the ones that bear the brunt. The protagonist is Onai, whose life is a catalogue of misfortunes at the hand of her extremely abusive husband, Gari. Although Gari is employed, he does not bring anything home since he claims that he is already offering accommodation to his family. Onai is the ultimate breadwinner of the family who juggles between vending and dressmaking, to make ends meet. In a fit of rage, Gari throws down her sewing machine and it breaks beyond repair thereby putting the dressmaking to an end.

Gari and Onai have three children, Ruva, Rita, and Fari, the only son. Onai is entrapped in marriage and receives support from her friend Katy, whose marriage to John is a stable one. Katy and John have a daughter, Faith, who is studying Law at the University of Zimbabwe. Faith is in love with Tom, a young and rich farmer whose sister Emily is a medical doctor. Emily, together with other women, run the Kushinga project that gives legal and psychosocial support to girls and women who suffer various forms of abuse at the hands of men. As Onai's ordeal unfolds, much, in terms of women's empowerment, is realized and indeed, given an opportunity, African women can contribute meaningfully to development at a large scale. However, the African women's progress is hampered by the clutches of patriarchy still visible in the text and these will be discussed next.

4.2 THE CLUTCHES OF PATRIARCHY

4.2.1 Preface

"The masculinity that is exhibited in *The Uncertainty of Hope* thrives on violence, subordination of women, irresponsibility and insatiable sexual desire" (Chitando, 2011:148). The Zimbabwean society employs several tactics by which to oppress, control and frustrate women. The marriage institution is one arena where patriarchal tendencies are seen at work. This is not peculiar to

Zimbabwe but it is a trend that has grown relentlessly in the patriarchal pockets of Africa. This has had negative effects on society in general as it stunts growth and brings social discord. I will now discuss some of the tools of oppression as portrayed in this text.

4.2.2 Grooming and stereotyping

There is serious negative stereotyping of women in this society and it comes naturally as it is perpetrated by some of the men characters generally perceived as good. Even some of the women characters are guilty of this and their guilt can be traced back to the grooming they are subjected to from the cradle. As Chukwuma rightfully points out, “women conditioning in Africa is the greatest barrier toward a fulfilment of the self” and this is the unfulfilled individual that is encountered in marriage, at a work place and in the house (Chukwuma, 1994:ix).

John is one of the more rational men in the novel, presumably so designed by the author to highlight and contrast failures such as Gari. However, in one of his discussions with his wife Katy, he churns out stereotypical statements that betray the remnants of patriarchy in him. In his opinion, even in the best of times, women can be very irrational. This is said in reference to Onai’s love for Gari. He goes on to observe that a poor woman will always be a poor woman and declares “*Hazvichinje!*” (18), meaning that it will never change. This only goes to reflect how the patriarchal society wants women to remain where they are. In the ensuing discussion, both husband and wife agree that the idea of Onai, poor as she is now, ever owning a house is inconceivable and ridiculous. She is a woman and hence, given her marital upheavals, can never amount to anything useful on her own, in the absence of Gari. All this is in spite of the fact that these are Onai’s closest friends and sympathizers.

Even in her private thoughts, Onai displays how she has been groomed to accept the advantageous position that society has carved out for a man in a marital situation. When her husband has not returned home and she is debating whether to file a missing person’s report, what stops her is the obvious thing that they will say to her and to which she subscribes. It is a man’s prerogative to run his household as he wishes, with no allegiance to any rules, especially those dictated by a woman, and her husband was no exception. “He was, after all, a man, no less so than the next” (121). This is highly reflective of the society’s line of thought.

Another reflection of the society's grooming is shown through the character of Nzou, the Assistant Commissioner in the Zimbabwe Republic Police. Influenced by the same line of thought that weakens women's position, Nzou spews out vitriolic and stereotypical language against women. He hates having to deal with women, preferring to deal with John rather than Katy. Whilst on his way to see Katy in order to transact in the shady foreign currency deal, he encounters a slow moving woman driver and hurls insults at her by calling her a brainless idiot. In typically stereotypical fashion, he muses that women are such bad drivers and if it were up to him, women would never be allowed on the roads at all.

It is such stereotypical attitudes that are passed on from men to men and from men to women and they end up creating standards by which both men and women ought to be bound. It is because of this that even other women are sceptical about the Kushinga project simply because it is run by women. Maya claims that Kushinga is run by divorcees bent on persuading married women to divorce. Those that could have benefitted from this intervention fail to do so because of this stereotyping and grooming that casts a shadow of doubt on anything initiated by women.

4.2.3 Violence

Violence is another tool that is used by the patriarchal system to oppress women in an attempt to suppress any form of dissent. There is an upsurge in gender based violence which has culminated into what is now being termed "passion killing" or "crimes of passion." This is largely attributed to women's continued stay in abusive relationships, such as is the case with Onai. Petersen (1988:150) observes that many women "will hang on to the same man even after he has lost interest." It is apparent that Gari has lost interest in Onai. This entrapment usually has disastrous consequences. Hatty (2000:5) states that "women are more than twice more likely to be murdered by an intimate partner than by a stranger." Most women hang on because of the grooming that obliges them to respect cultural expectations at the expense of their safety, freedom and being. This raises a crucial question for African women today-that of self-definition and self-determination. In this text, violence comes in various forms some of which will be discussed here.

4.2.4 Domestic Space

"Often victims of violence from all quarters of society, including their very own, many black women, regardless of ethnicity, often emerged as the most disenfranchised citizens and largely

held no legal or hereditary rights to land in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe” (Mabura, 2010:90). Emily and her fellow medical practitioners observe the disenfranchisement referred to above as they attend to domestic violence victims who are, so far, women only.

Domestic violence is quite rife in Africa and is widely accepted by both men and women. Even lecturers at institutions of higher learning propagate such to their students. Faith remembers that her lecturer once said women over forty simply expect to be beaten or abused. Such information, released by an authoritative figure like a lecturer, readies the young men and women for such eventualities in their marital lives thereby ensnaring women to such violence.

Onai is thirty five and hence there is clear evidence that she has been groomed to expect and condone battering by her husband. Her mother, MaMusara, endured an abusive marriage, for the sake of her children, as she says and she is seen in the text instilling the same expectations in her daughter. She is one of the female extensions of patriarchy in the text. MaMusara tells her daughter that marriage is not something that one can just walk away from, “once you get in, you stay. *Kugomera uripo chaiko mwanangu...no matter how hard it gets*” (7). Once such advice comes from the mother, patriarchy maintains its stranglehold on women. Onai is proud to endure this violence since she feels that “this is the essence of a true African woman...perseverance in the face of all hardship” (7). In her advice, MaMusara advocates the “good family” philosophy which holds that a woman cannot raise a good family without a man by her side, even if the man is as much of a menace as Gari is.

Gari, the epitome of patriarchy in this text, hurls verbal insults at Onai. He shouts at her in front of the children, demeaning her. He comes home late very drunk, with his trousers zipped open, which possibly suggests infidelity. Upon being told of the robbery, he shouts “You bitch! ...You whore! *Uri hure!* (You are a prostitute) ...You liar!” (9) and goes on to accuse Onai of infidelity and beats her up. This is verbal violence which has serious negative psychological effects on women.

In perpetuation of the same philosophy, Onai silences the dissenting voices of her children who are not happy with how their father treats her. Discussing their father is taboo. Indirectly, she is saying to her son, it is alright for him to beat up his wife or any woman for that matter, in the

future. She is also telling her daughters to expect and accept battering from their husbands. After sustaining injuries from Gari's beating, Onai conceals the injuries to the world in order to preserve the frail vestiges of her dignity. She hides in a cocoon of pretence that no battering is taking place. Onai goes to the extent of formulating careful responses at the hospital to avoid implicating Gari. When faced with the reality of her husband's affair with the well-known prostitute, Gloria, Onai declares in her heart that "it was alright for Gari to assault her" (126) yet in reality, there is no justification for domestic violence and no worse evil can ever make it right.

Onai's is not the only case of domestic violence. Emily attends to a young woman who is beaten by her husband for serving him cold food. In the first place, the man does not bring any food home so it is the woman who has to provide for the family. Secondly, due to power cuts there is no electricity with which to warm the food and for this, the woman is beaten up. Emily and the policeman's shared observation is that abused women only seek treatment and at times report the abuse but they never feature at the courtroom largely because of their economic dependence on the men. Some do not attend court because they are too demoralised to see clearly whilst others do not attend to avoid compromising their marriages, which are already compromised anyway. This is another branch of the "good family" syndrome.

On several occasions Katy advises her friend to leave Gari because of domestic violence but it is evident that Onai has been so affected that she has lost all self-esteem to value her own life. This is what patriarchy aims to achieve through domestic violence for it to be easy to control and oppress women. This goes to show that domestic violence is indeed a tool of the patriarchal system that entrenches men in their culturally designed superior position and maintains women in their compromised position. The presence of the Kushinga Women's Project offers hope. This is a women-initiated support group that offers psycho-social support to women who are victims of domestic violence and other domestic related issues. However, most women are still under the clutches of patriarchy that they do not seem to appreciate the moral and legal support available to them through this project.

4.2.5 State-sponsored Violence

Operation Murambatsvina is another form of violence elaborately described in this text and in this case, it is state-sponsored. It is largely women and children who suffer most as a result of this, as

reflected in the text. Operation Murambatsvina is also referred to as the Zimbabwean Tsunami. "Zimbabweans equate the destruction that took place during Operation Murambatsvina to the 2004 Asian Tsunami in reference to the speed, vengeance and the use of force, which was similar to the devastation that was caused by the Indian Ocean earthquake" (Nyamanhindi, 2008:118). Operation Murambatsvina leaves women vulnerable as can be seen by the conglomeration of the affected at Tsiga Grounds.

When members of the Kushinga Women's Project undertake a peaceful march, riot police beat them up mercilessly (264-265). "These women activists question the injustice perpetrated against women, thus posing danger to patriarchal rule. This is why they receive the brutal treatment from the male police officers who want to keep them in their "right place" (Chitando, 2011:135).

4.2.6 Sexual Violence

Women are viewed as sexual objects and again, this is one of the tools used by the males in the community to suppress women. At a very young age, Rita is sexually molested by a plain-clothed state agent who squeezes her breasts when she gets arrested for illegal vending. The same is replicated deep in the village when a young boy squeezes her breasts with impunity. These serious violations of her rights imprint in her that she is a sexual object that men can have at will with no consequences befalling them. Such acts of sexual violence are also meted out at elderly women. The women that conduct cross-border trading are subjected to humiliating and degrading searches by male immigration officials where they are stripped and prodded in their private parts. A gang rape is reported and nobody is arrested. This is as if the male system in power is protective over the male perpetrators of these crimes.

After Operation Murambatsvina comes Operation Garikayi. This is meant to benefit those displaced by the former operation. On advice, Onai joins the queue at the municipal offices to register for a house under the scheme. This commences the Boora debacle. Boora, a male municipal officer, can only help Onai in exchange for sexual favours. He sexually molests her in the office but she violently resists that. Again, this goes to show how the patriarchal system is unsympathetic to vulnerable women. The system creates the vulnerability in order to capitalise on the women. As it emerges later, the sexual molestation has gone on unabated at these offices and it takes Onai's resistance to unearth this and bring Boora to book.

4.2.7 Marriage

Marriage, as has been discussed with regard to previous texts, is one major tool of oppression of women that is used by the male-dominated system. The system crafts values that only benefit the men and puts the female partners in jeopardy. One such value, as discussed by some of the female characters in this text, is womanhood that is defined and cemented by childbearing. The patriarchal grooming has led them to believe that for a woman to be complete, she must bear a child or children, especially sons. Barrenness in marriage is ascribed to the female partner and she is heavily stigmatized. It is inconceivable for barrenness to be occasioned by the man's sterility.

4.2.8 Womanhood and Childbearing

Katy and John love each other. However, their love becomes insignificant in the eyes of this heavily patriarchal society when they fail to conceive in the first five years of their marriage. Because of her childless state in those initial years, Katy suffers humiliation at the hands of her mother-in-law. The old woman laments why her son wasted *lobola* on a barren woman. This is reminiscent of Amatokwu in *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) who tells his wife, Nnu Ego, that he will not waste his seed on a barren woman. This is after she claims her conjugal rights in a polygamous set up.

A childless woman is devalued. John's mother discusses Katy, even with her adolescent daughter, where she says she suspects that Katy is a man because, unlike a real woman, she has a "husky voice...such a straight board-like body...no breasts, and no hips to speak of" (29). This is stigmatisation that again puts a dent on this otherwise stable marriage. When they finally have Faith, still this is not enough as Faith is a girl and they fail to have another child. Inwardly, Katy knows how men and society value the boy child; Katy knows her place and does not get into unnecessary quarrels with John. Again, this puts the stability of their marriage in question: is it dependent on the absence of a son? Emecheta, in Petersen, observes that "in most African countries, the birth of a son enhances a woman's authority in the family" (Emecheta, 1988:178). In view of this, does Katy restrain herself simply because John values her with or without a son?

Katy is not the only one who suffers stigmatisation as a result of barrenness. Maya, the vocal market woman who is known for gossip and for dominating her husband, is also childless. In her

thesis on gender oppression and possibilities of women empowerment, Nyanhongo poses the question “Why, then, if science or nature can prove that failure to conceive could be the fault of either of the two, man or woman, is the blame apportioned to women?” (Nyanhongo, 2011:10). Even before it is proven who is barren, she is readily blamed for their childless state. Her flagrant disregard for other people’s privacy is attributed to her childlessness. Onai quips that “maybe that was what being childless did to a woman” (123). Nyanhongo adds voice to this by stating that “it was believed that if a woman could not bear children it was because she was a witch” (Nyanhongo, 2011:9).

Vocal as she is, Maya’s voice adds to the perpetuation of the patriarchal hold on women. After Gari has brought home the renowned prostitute, Gloria, as his second wife, Katy advises Onai to leave. Maya then boisterously demands “Where is the pride of being a woman...?” (221). It is this pride that has been designed by patriarchy to ensnare women to endure rather than enjoy their marriages. This links closely to what has been referred to earlier as the virtues of being a good wife.

4.2.9 Oppression

As has been discussed earlier, both sexes are groomed for their specified roles in marriage, hence the culture-sanctioned perpetuation of the oppression of women in marriage within a patriarchal set up. Onai broods over her situation whilst in hospital, nursing wounds inflicted by Gari and her inner thoughts reveal how psychologically battered she has been by patriarchal ideologies and ideals. Her conclusions are so guided and however she feels, she is so oppressed that she cannot deviate from the standard measure handed down to her by society.

She would not be able to bear the shame of being a divorced woman. How could she possibly face a world that despised divorcees; looked down on single mothers? Marital status was everything. It did not really matter how educated or otherwise skilled a woman was. A woman’s worth was relative to one man, her husband... (46).

This is psychological oppression that is quite latent but effective and keeps the woman in a place that suits the patriarchal system. She is on her own and cannot reason beyond the womanhood she has been groomed to believe in. Being a divorcée has been so stigmatising that she rather chooses

to stay in this life threatening union than risk being a divorcée or single mother. She does not have the tenacity that Lucia in *Nervous Conditions* has. Onai's society has attributed so much value to women's marital status that it is unfathomable for her to lose her 'married' status. The mental oppression is so much that she is satisfied to be an appendage of her husband. This puts her in such a position that her insecurity secures her husband's position as the infallible partner who must do as he pleases knowing she is there to clean up or conceal the mess.

Onai is not even sure how much her husband earns. "The only time that she dared ask, she had been threatened with immediate divorce. A threat that had promptly extinguished her smouldering curiosity" (33). Once again, she is muzzled with the threat of losing her current marital status. As wife, it should have been natural for her to know and be part of the family budgeting process. She is denied of that and on top of that, she has to foot the hospital bill that is as a result of domestic violence. When Gari gets admitted at the hospital, it is Onai who foots the bill. She carries that debt right up to Gari's death, which leaves her in a serious situation. Gari squanders the money that he earns, including his severance package, but leaves all the family financial responsibilities on Onai. Gloria, Gari's prostitute, enjoys the money that Gari brings but takes no responsibility whatsoever.

Onai feels "a void within her" that needs to be filled (148). It is a void created by the system to ensnare her. In spite of her knowledge that her husband is sleeping with a prostitute who is possibly HIV positive, she fails to confront him but instead feels a strong need for him to hold her and tell her that everything will be alright. These conflicting emotions arise from the psychological oppression she suffers and is forced to accept, which is at variance with the reality she faces. Because of the system, her life is now "irreversibly set in this cycle of abuse and indifference" and she is indeed entrapped (181).

To augment the family income, Onai opts to attend a dressmaking course. Her mother sells cattle so that she is able to pay for the course. In this patriarchal set up, this should have been Gari's responsibility but instead, she suffers beatings because Gari sees her decision as wilful defiance, a deliberate challenge to his authority as a man (59). Gari oppresses Onai so much that he denies her permission to acquire a passport, a basic document that she could have used in her entrepreneurial endeavours. The patriarchal system dehumanises the woman to such an extent that

she needs her husband's permission to get a passport though she is an adult who must be able to make such decisions and be accountable for her actions.

4.2.10 Fear of the unknown and entrapment

To ensure guaranteed control of women, the patriarchal system induces a fear of the unknown in women. This entrapment is akin to paralysis and hinders the women from being who they are and achieving what they can achieve for themselves or for the community.

When confronted by doctors about her injuries that are consistent with domestic violence, Onai vehemently denies being a victim of such violence and declares "I am not in a violent marriage. I have a loving husband and I don't need any help from you" (45). Inwardly, she does not know why and she asks herself "is it fear of the unknown?" This fear is a construct of the patriarchal system that ensures it is embedded in girl children from a very early age. Its grasp on Onai is visible throughout the text. After another bout of domestic violence, Katy again suggests to Onai that she should leave her husband and she is quite abrupt and rash with her. She confesses, "I can't leave Gari. I just can't-" and she can see "no way out other than to stay with Gari" (83/84). Onai is an example of an able-bodied, mature woman who has been so damaged by the system that she cannot see her life anywhere else but with her abusive husband. She is paralysed by the fear of the unknown.

The fear of the unknown is exacerbated by poverty. Onai reasons that if she leaves Gari, he would never pay maintenance. This shows how the fear of the unknown has so magnified her husband that she thinks he is above the law. This has distorted her perception of the support systems around her and she defines everything according to her fear of Gari. She is vulnerable because of her lack of means and she feels secure just to be Gari's wife. The irony, however, is that though she is there, she still is the breadwinner since she is the one who brings substance to the family whilst the supposed breadwinner squanders all his earnings on beer and prostitutes. This, in effect, shows that she is simply entrapped by the ideal or standard set by the patriarchal system. At a later stage again she laments with Katy, "Where would I go with the children?" (144) and this is indicative of how poverty has so entrapped and paralysed her. When her children decide to be street vendors in order to supplement the income, her friend Katy is against it. She again points at the root of the problem and suggests that Onai should leave her husband. One would want to

believe that after her children are thus exposed, Onai might relent but she still displays her fear of the unknown by asking “Where would I go if I left Gari? I would simply be homeless” (189). Poverty again becomes an accomplice of her fear of the unknown and effectively entraps Onai to Gari. Even when Gari brings Gloria for a formal introduction as his second wife, Onai admires the freedom of the cockroach in her house and acknowledges that “she was in chains and her life was falling apart” (217). She endures such humiliation from her husband in front of her children because she is so paralysed by the system and cannot free herself because of her fear of the unknown.

This fear of the unknown brings about a sense of worthlessness on the part of the women. At the inheritance ceremony, the patriarch, VaSolo, declares that “every home needs a man to be in charge” and at that declaration, Onai “could already see that she would never be free” (245). The “perfect home” theory which is developed by the patriarchal system is so ingrained in Onai that she feels she cannot do anything about that decision, hence the admission that she will never be free. In spite of this temporary setback however, Onai shows some agency by refusing to be inherited. As Niekerk and Michael (2014:2) observe, “in the course of the novel, Onai becomes able to chart her way out of patriarchal confinement.” This she does without violence and it is in conformity with Ashcroft’s post-colonial resistance.

As Emily and Faith discuss Onai’s plight, Emily observes that “often, such women are so dejected that they won’t or can’t even ask for help...Or realise that they need to” (267). Katy also observes that as women, they have been cornered into living in a way that is unimaginable. Such observations are testimony to the entrapment of women by the patriarchal order that seeks to keep them under- and undeveloped. When such violence is hurled at them, they suffer a type of dejection that paralyses them.

4.2.11 Polygamy and inheritance

The system sanctions polygamy and uses it as a tool with which to oppress women as the men seek self-aggrandisement. Gari intends to take Gloria as his second wife since “traditionally, that was acceptable and no-one would criticise him” and given Gloria’s age, he would be the envy of many men (214). Gloria is a known prostitute and Gari even wonders if any man can marry a prostitute. However, the lustful thought of Gloria being exclusively his, with all her physical

attributes, is the push for Gari to venture into polygamy. The fact that her husband brings another woman, a prostitute for that matter, demeans Onai and deals a heavy blow to her ego. This is not peculiar to Onai and neither is it peculiar to Zimbabwe. Nwapa notes that “it is true that bigamy is committed every day in Nigeria, but even the educated wife would hesitate to take action against her husband for the sake of the children” (Nwapa, 1998:96). This is precisely the reason why Onai does not report Gari. She is negatively affected, her focus shifts, and this affects her productivity, further strengthening her perception of dependence on Gari. Polygamy does not take into account the feelings of the first or current wives. According to tradition, the husband has to consult the senior wife. Again, the polygamist does not look at the socio-economic implications of such a move but just at what he gains from it. This is reminiscent of Naife in *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979), who keeps on marrying and inheriting wives in spite of his meagre resources.

When Gari dies, the patriarchal system invokes yet another tool of oppression called inheritance. The politics of inheritance in some African contexts dictate that what the husband owns belongs to his family group, not to the wife who remains an outsider. The family members plunder everything and “to salvage their conscience...they will discredit the wife through accusations of adultery or of killing him directly or indirectly” (Petersen, 1988:149). Hammar, quoted in Mabura (2010:90) observes that at the advent of Zimbabwe’s independence, the ZANU (PF) government “did not go so far as to challenge or reverse women’s access to and rights over land...women’s entitlements to land are secondary and remain largely dependent on men.” In concurrence with this, Ngcobo (1986:142) avers that “in patrilineal society, a woman cannot own land or cattle; neither can she participate in a debate or negotiation concerning property.” This sets the pace for the ultimate fate of Onai in so far as dwelling place is concerned—she has no entitlement and her children ultimately suffer the same consequence.

Whereas Gari’s death must have ushered to Onai a new lease of life, it opens another chapter of oppression. When VaSolo declares the need for inheritance, Toro is commissioned as the heir apparent of Gari’s estate and this includes Onai and the children. Toro offers no respite for Onai. At the beginning, he ogles at her with his lecherous eye so badly that his wife Shungu, gives him a murderous look. This goes to show that, first and foremost, the woman is considered as a sex tool and by being inherited, Onai cedes her power over her body to Toro. In the ensuing discussion, Toro registers his intention of moving in with his family and Onai justifiably objects to that citing

the size of the house. Toro's male pride is wounded by the objection and he chases the whole family out of the house. By so doing, he proves already that he is not fatherly hence is ill-qualified to look after the family. Whereas with Gari the family has a home, with Toro, they do not even have a roof above them. Ruva is registered to write her Ordinary Level examination and needs a sure shelter for her studies but Toro does not see all this. The inheritance instrument empowers him to make such detrimental decisions with impunity.

Before Onai and children leave, Toro demands Gari's bank card and "numbed by a sense of despair, Onai dug into her battered handbag and handed the card over" (248). This is part of the arsenal of inheritance, it numbs, and it paralyses the women and leaves them vulnerable to patriarchy. She has no family support system to report to since "the Moyo family had made it very clear that as a woman, a widow, she had no rights to take any independent initiative" (248). This sinks her further into her paralysis.

Onai's mother, MaMusara, though female, affirms the patriarchal order. When Onai decides to seek recourse in the courts of law, MaMusara vehemently objects to that, citing negative cultural implications. She is the one who is largely responsible for Onai's prolonged stay with Gari and after his death she again tells Onai that "you have to accept whatever your babamunini has decided" (259). Her main reason for advising so is that the girls would need to be married off and Fari, the boy, would need to be guided into manhood and these are the supposed roles that Toro must play. The irony of the matter is that Toro, by virtue of his misplaced judgement does not display any father-figure quality so his presence or absence will not matter in the children's lives.

4.3 THE IRONY

Whilst the men are perceived as the stronger of the two genders, strange and ironic behaviour is seen in them especially when they get subjected to the same conditions to which they subject women. When the imminent shutdown of their company is announced and the prospect of joblessness hovers above them, their first reaction, in commiseration, is to find a scapegoat to blame instead of planning ahead. Gari swears by his mother's grave that "this is all happening because of the sanctions imposed on our country" (37). When his workmate Silas questions the logic behind his statement, Gari does not seem able to explain anything. Instead, in a bid to strengthen his friend, he turns stereotypical and says since they are men, they do not need to

“panic like a bunch of women” (37). Chitando (2011:151) argues that the reference made to the stereotype of “a bunch of women” who always panic, and the subsequent proclamation of one’s manhood show how afraid men are. The men shout “tiri varume” (we are men) but fear and hopelessness are evident in the utterances. This is not the reaction consistent with the dictates of the patriarchal system.

The whole issue of retrenchment, as Gari sees it, “is an outright threat to his manhood” (37). Gari then goes to ask himself “What would happen to him if he stopped earning a regular salary?” (37). The joblessness state is what his wife and many other women in the text are in and yet they have managed to feed and clothe their families. In Gari’s case, his wife has managed to do that without his help at all.

While faced with the closure of his company, Gari plans nothing except being with Gloria, the prostitute, even when he doubts that “any man would marry a prostitute,” (40) thereby ironically doubting his own manhood. As a man, he is the one with skewed values and priorities in the face of an economic meltdown and retrenchment. This is in sharp contrast to Onai who thinks about how to improve herself economically and is even attending interviews. She upsets the societal expectations.

When Katy confronts Mr Nzou, the senior police officer, about the rumours about Operation Murambatsvina, the officer muses how this shanty-town woman has come across such highly confidential intelligence. This is quite a disparaging remark full of disdain but the irony of it all lies in the fact that it is this same woman who eventually brings about his downfall.

Another irony presents itself during the implementation of Operation Murambatsvina when the police details are about to destroy Sheila’s shack at Onai’s house. Onai volunteers to dismantle it herself but the policeman says that she needs a man to be able to do that. In the first place, Gari is not physically present and secondly, he is not man enough to defend his family as this society would expect. Where a man has said a woman cannot, Onai goes on to demonstrate that whatever work has been previously the preserve of men, women can also do. She successfully destroys the shack single-handedly.

Women and children are the ones who suffer most as a result of Operation Murambatsvina. Some of the women commit suicide as a result of the harsh conditions and the sense of loss that they suffer as their life savings and immovable property are razed to the ground. The irony lies in Hondo, the war veteran. That status on its own ascribes great bravery and stealth to him. However, exposed to the same conditions, Hondo resists and when his resistance is thwarted and his house tumbles down, he displays that he is not robust enough and commits suicide in the most gruesome way of throwing himself in front of a moving train.

Gari's family life presents fodder for irony. He is nothing more than just a biological father of his children. He does not relate with them and he does not plan for their future. In spite of all this, Onai tries not to deprive them of their father hence her continued stay. The irony here is that he is already an absentee-father and the children are fully aware of that. They have so far managed to live without him hence there is no need for Onai to trouble herself with trying to preserve what is not there. Even at the inheritance meeting when VaSolo says every home needs a man in charge, this is still quite ironic since Gari's home has survived without him.

4.4 RESISTANCE AND TRANSFORMATION

4.4.1 Preface

Blamires (1991:374) feels that "women as a body lack the cohesion to assert themselves against categorisation" by the patriarchal system. He goes on to state that "women are so moulded and indoctrinated by tradition that they are prevented from assuming the status of beings with liberty." This however, is not consistent with the majority of the women in this text who offer resistance to patriarchal tendencies in various forms. Most of them score successes and prove their mettle in the fast changing socio-economic urban environment. By so doing, most of them experience notable transformation of perception and begin to interpret their environment and circumstances in different ways. Others use unorthodox methods of resistance and still manage to survive. There are still those who succumb to what they are subjected to by patriarchy with little or no resistance at all.

4.4.2 Entrepreneurship and Thrift

Faced with an improvident husband, Onai engages in entrepreneurial activities to make ends meet. The system would have wanted her to be so poor that she is totally dependent on Gari for sustenance. She assesses her situation and decides to juggle between dressmaking and vending and eventually becomes the breadwinner of the family. Though the system does not call her that, she is effectively so. Gari, the quintessence of the typical man, feels threatened by his thrifty wife and in a senseless fit of rage, destroys Onai's sewing machine, effectively robbing her of her means of production. She circumvents this setback and thrives as a market vegetable vendor. Contrasted with Gari who comes to his wit's end at the termination of his employ, Onai diversifies and refuses to be rendered useless. She uses her disadvantaged position to equip herself with skills. "Years of raising her children on next to nothing had made her meticulously thrifty. They had taught her the importance of striking a good bargain" (75). She assesses the economic terrain prevailing in Zimbabwe at the moment and wisely decides not to deposit her money in the bank. While other people are struggling and spending unproductive hours in bank queues, her "current bank was made up of three Lactogen tins which inhabited a spot under her bed" (105). Though she has not done any course in business management, she records her "deposits and withdrawals meticulously in a little pocket book" in order to assess the success of business (105). This goes to show that given a chance and the necessary support, African women can prove their mettle in any business endeavour. Their inclusion in social transformation, as is the STIWANIST call, will guarantee society in development that is coupled with socio-economic parity.

Her friend Katy also is a vendor and she does quite well in her business too. She eventually takes over the foreign currency business that her husband is engaged in and does it quite well. When threatened by the corrupt law enforcement agents, she is not cowed down but also pulls her trump card and eventually secures the release of her husband who has been arrested for illegal foreign currency deals.

Rita, Onai and Gari's second daughter, displays much hope as the woman in the making. She follows exactly what is happening at her home and decides to help her mother in the vending business. She conducts her own research and establishes that the vending licences take long before they are issued and declares "But Mum, listen, I have a plan" (176). She ushers in fresh impetus and hope. In the patriarchal set up she has both her age and gender to her disadvantage but that

does not deter her. She eventually succeeds and she starts vending and brings in the much needed cash. What pushes her at that young age is also the fact that she has heard how her father has responded to her mother when she has raised the issue that as husband and wife they should share financial responsibilities. Gari stands by the fact that he is providing accommodation which emerges later to be an inherited house for which Gari did not spend a cent on its purchase or construction. Effectively, he is contributing nothing. The firebrand Rita is the hope that the fight for socio-economic emancipation will not end with the likes of MaMusara or even with Onai and Katy.

4.4.3 Non-violent revolt

Non-violent revolt is largely an intellectual game. It is in keeping with Ashcroft's post-colonial resistance. Faith has been advised against pre-marital sex which, however, she engages in anyway. The main reason her mother advises her is so that she avoids contracting HIV since she will be guaranteed of one partner. She however looks at Onai's life and asks "What good that would have done for a woman like *Mainini* Onai?" (174). In her analysis, avoiding sex before marriage makes no difference to one's lifetime risk of getting HIV. She goes on to suggest that it can only increase life expectancy by delaying the age of infection. This is accurate reasoning which however is against patriarchal grooming. Onai indeed is a faithful wife with a promiscuous husband who can easily infect her with the virus in spite of her chastity.

Katy, as earlier mentioned, offers non-violent resistance when she comes face-to-face with police officer Nzou who does not want to assist with the release of her husband. In her illegal foreign currency deals, she has always made her clients sign her receipt book as acknowledgement that they have received money. This is foresight that delivers her husband at the opportune time. When Nzou refuses to help, she reminds him of his signatures and his ego is deflated and he eventually calls the member-in-charge to release John. Without any violence, Katy scores a resounding victory over the feared and notorious senior police officer who despises what he calls shanty-town women.

4.4.4 Solidarity and activism

One tool that the women in this text use to resist the effects of the patriarchal system and also to declare their presence and usefulness is solidarity. Coupled with that is also activism. This happens at individual levels and also as a group of women.

4.4.4.1 As individuals

4.4.4.1.1 Socially

The women are in solidarity as individuals on a social basis. Emily considers Faith as her protégé and vows to ensure that she is not oppressed by her brother in their courtship and eventual marriage. She has the same position as that of Tete in *Nervous Conditions* (1988) but unlike Tete who becomes an extension of patriarchy, she chooses not to perpetuate the negative and oppressive tendencies of the patriarchal system. She is Tom's sister and according to the system, she should be on Tom's side, sanctioning whatever oppression that can be meted out against Faith as she must be seen to support her brother at any cost. She, however, introduces a paradigm shift and chooses to destroy the antagonism that is usually expected between such in-law relationships. In a way, she resists the standing divide-and-rule patriarchal tool that has seen sisters-in-law antagonising each other.

In the same vein, there is a healthy and supportive mother and daughter relationship between Faith and Katy. Katy "had always stressed that she should never be indebted to a man, except in marriage" and, as an afterthought, added, "and not even then" (25). Such support is quite rare especially in such a turbulent and virulent economic environment. She takes the advice and turns down Tom's offer to offset her outstanding university fees.

When Emily assesses Onai's injuries and is satisfied that they are consistent with domestic violence, she offers her solidarity and advises Onai to seek recourse in the arm of the law. She tells her, "Don't be afraid." Again, she introduces Onai to the "excellent support group" that can give her the much needed psycho-social support (44). This is serious and necessary solidarity that aims at empowering women to circumvent the evils of the patriarchal system. Though she does not get an immediate positive response from Onai, she sows a seed that bears fruit later as Onai eventually seeks the assistance of the Kushinga group.

4.4.4.1.2 Economically

The solidarity extends even to economic issues and still at individual basis. As she prepares for her wedding, Faith has the potential to buy an exquisite wedding gown in South Africa as per the suggestion given by Tom. Tom can afford it. However, in solidarity with her *Mainini* Onai, Faith chooses to contract her to design and make the gown for her. She has the hope that this can be a good marketing platform that can catapult Onai's business to unimaginable heights. This eventually bears the desired fruit as it is precisely because of that contract that Onai finally gets a job to work for Mawaya, the Mbare vagrant who turns out to be Mr. Tapiwa Jongwe the renowned business mogul.

Katy has a sewing machine but does not have the skill. Onai then offers to teach her how to make duvets. Though she does not have any cash, she has a skill to share in solidarity with her friend. As they discuss this issue, Katy suggests that whilst Onai is waiting for her vending licence she can in the meantime apply for a passport. A passport will enable her to engage in cross-border trade which has proven to be quite a lucrative business. Their bond transcends social boundaries as they seek to empower each other economically.

4.4.4.2 Group solidarity

The solidarity of women as groupings has immense strength. It is reminiscent of the Aba riot that linked women from different geographic settings who did not even speak the same language but their common resolve bound them together (Nwapa 1986:99). Nnoromele (2002:185) adds voice to this by stating that "solidarity among African women is a long-standing avenue of survival for women." The Kushinga Women Project is the present-day prototype of such solidarity albeit in a non-confrontational manner. This is a group that is non-violent but that faces head-on, the vagaries of women in this particular era. This group offers legal and psychosocial support. Emily assures Onai that she is not alone, hence the need for her to enlist with the group so that her burden becomes a shared one, making it lighter.

Even in seemingly mundane issues such as negotiating for the lowering of fresh produce prices with VaGudo, the farmer, the women speak with one voice. VaGudo finally budes and asks "How can a hapless man like me win when a group of aggressive Mbare women have ganged up against me?" (75). This goes to show that when in solidarity, women can win any battle.

With the destruction of their market stalls and the inevitable temporary closure of Mbare Musika, the women get incensed. Led by Maya, the notorious gossip, and Beady Eyes, one of the lady vendors, they decide to offer some violent and physical resistance. After Beady Eyes's testimony of the thrill of overturning a police car, "the notion of engaging in a bit of violence was suddenly quite appealing" to the Mbare women (133). These are women who have endured immense suffering at the hand of the patriarchal machinery and this act of violence is "the perfect outlet for all their anger and perennial frustration" (133). This type of resistance however, fails to achieve the desired result as the women are walloped by the riot police and soon disperse without having achieved anything but beatings, teargas and arrests. According to Assistant Commissioner Nzou, "the people had to pay for daring to launch a counter-attack on police officers" (134). This, however, does not disprove the fact that in solidarity, women can sharpen themselves into effective activists who can make their own statements about their rights.

After the demise of their Mbare stalls, Onai and Hannah, a fellow vendor, decide to move together but each selling her wares to motorists. A few frustrated motorists are verbally abusive and quite hostile but in their solidarity, "a few insults could not dent their determination" (210). Their determination comes from their resolve to take care of their families and their strength is in each other. Hannah falls sick whilst in a long queue to get groceries. Her friends Onai and Katy are there with her to support and advise her. In that incident, Katy concludes that "all they had was each other," an assertion that reveals the importance of their solidarity as women (332). As they continue in their entrepreneurship, the ladies continue to face stiff challenges and they discover humour and resilience as some of their weapons that help them fight despondency and hopelessness. They laugh as only two township women hardened by poverty can do. "Humour and resilience were their only weapons in a situation that would have otherwise crushed them" (332). These are rare weapons as most people, especially the men portrayed in this text, can only complain or commit suicide as the other women and also war veteran Hondo do.

After witnessing the escalation of domestic violence inflicted on women by their husbands or male live-in partners, Emily and other Kushinga Women's Project affiliates, plan and successfully stage a peaceful demonstration against gender based violence. They follow the correct procedure of acquiring police clearance for such an activity and also asking for police escort. The patriarchal

system denies the activists police escort. Hundreds of women throng the area in front of the Town House and set off. In spite of having granted them permission to march in protest, the system unleashes armed riot police upon them and many are beaten and eventually arrested. This is a direct attack on any voice of dissent from the women. The police come up with trumped-up charges of public disorder and inciting violence. Faith and Emily initially resist the signing of the admission-of-guilt forms. Emily and Faith even arrange for doctors to come and treat their fellow activists that remain in the cells when they are bailed out by Tom. Though they are disturbed, the success they score underscores the strength of their solidarity. The patriarchal system is suspicious of initiatives by women hence such violent resistance.

4.4.5 Sexuality

4.4.5.1 Sexuality as choice and empowerment

When it comes to sexuality, women in this text use their choices as a tool of resistance to empower themselves. The single and married have their ways of offering their resistance and these will be looked at separately.

4.4.5.2 Sexuality and the single woman

The point of departure would be the aspect of definition. Faith knows so many women facing difficult choices because of their difficult conditions. She asks Melody to confirm her lover Chanda's marital status and Melody confirms that he is married. The ensuing discussion reveals that Melody has departed from the hitherto given advice that girls be wary of older men who may want to use them. She sounds empowered enough to make a deliberate choice to date a married man and feels she is the one using him. It is a 'who-is-fooling-who' situation where there is transactional sex but which cannot quite be called prostitution. In Musekiwa's (2012:37) view, "Tagwira's depiction suggests that Melody is an innocent victim responding to the economic situation." Whereas her friend Faith subscribes to the hitherto acceptable image of a decent young woman, Melody has since adopted a paradigm shift. Faith advises "This man will turn you into his 'small house' (coined term for mistress). You could end up with a broken heart..." Melody responds "I know he's lying but it doesn't bother me. Right now, I'm getting what I want. One

day I will find a decent man to marry” (78-79). This is serious resistance to the standard set by the patriarchal system. The system will stigmatise her and label her a prostitute or small house but she is not worried about that. She even has hope that she will one day find a man to marry. To substantiate her point, Melody lists all that she benefits from Chanda namely payment of her university fees and the pledge he has made to do so until she graduates. He buys her clothes, groceries and gives her pocket money. Her counter-argument to Faith’s suggestion that she gets somebody her age is that no twenty-two year old has the means and experience to be able to do that for her. This sounds plausible especially given the socio-political situation prevailing in Zimbabwe at that time.

Melody has made this choice through reasoning beyond the usual and declares that “this is what I have to do, not what I want” (80). This shows that she has not entered this union blindly and it is clear it is not for love. These are two consenting adults who are seeking immediate gratification with the full knowledge of the futureless state of their relationship. Both get sexual gratification but Melody gets the economic support in addition. Because of her poverty, Melody confesses that she has spent sleepless nights considering whether to become a prostitute in order to finance her studies but finally she consciously decides to play the role of ‘small house’ (mistress) to Chanda so that she does not become every paying man’s woman. She allays her friend’s fear about her contracting H.I.V. from the relationship by telling her that she has thought about it and hence she uses condoms to protect herself. As a result of this, Melody declares that she will become a lawyer whatever it takes. In her opinion, it is the state of the economy, occasioned by the ruling patriarchal system that must be blamed for her situation and choices. She is resolute and defiant and at variance with the expectations of the patriarchal system. This is yet another instance of non-confrontational resistance which mirrors Ashcroft’s post-colonial resistance.

Sheila and Gloria are other single women who make choices about their sexuality. They too are in control of their sexuality and choose to be prostitutes. This is resistance to the moral dictates of the patriarchal system. Gloria hears that her previous partner has died of an HIV-related ailment and fear and anger wrestle with her sanity. She is a woman who has no illusions about her own HIV status though she is “shrewd enough to realise that it was just a matter of time before the inevitable happens” (39). She has observed the lonesome deaths that her compatriots in the profession have experienced and she chooses not to die like that. Rather, she needs a man of her own, “a man who would look after her when her HIV laid its claim upon her” (39). She resists

dying in poverty and devises a plan to better her economic status even in the face of sure death. Among all her clients, she chooses Gari to be that man. She deliberately goes out of her way to entice and coerce him and finally she is taken as a second wife much to the surprise of the community. This is a woman who has managed to some extent to take control of her destiny against all societal expectations for marriage is never the destination of prostitutes.

Sheila, Gari's former prostitute who is now a known HIV/AIDS sufferer, confesses to Onai that when she was a prostitute she did not care about catching HIV since she thought she would die from hunger. Her argument then was that as a prostitute she "could at least die with a full stomach" (62). In both cases, the women choose to resist but their resistance does not yield the desired results. They both succumb to the deadly HIV and fail to achieve anything of substance in their lives. The same fate is likely going to befall the Zimbabwean girls that Nzou is referring to when he says that "our girls are now crossing into Zambia in search of the kwacha...The girls over there are out of business because our girls charge so much less!" (179). These will receive temporary relief but most will contract the disease.

4.4.5.3 Sexuality and the married woman

Married women show resistance as well in their sexuality. The expectation is that since they are married, they should always consent to sexual intercourse with their husbands and any action to the contrary is not acceptable. In the face of HIV and AIDS, this becomes a concern especially for women with promiscuous husbands and also those in the high risk group that are perpetually exposed to tempting situations like Katy's husband, John. The patriarchal system already prepares the woman to expect and accept her husband's extramarital affairs. The aunts, who are the usual extensions of the patriarchal order, are the ones tasked with the task. Katy's aunt tells her to accept that men have 'animalistic' needs that cannot be fulfilled by one woman; hence they are driven to look for other women (244).

Though Onai is worried when her husband does not come home early, she is not so sure if she wants him early in case she finds herself "under the undesirable obligation of intimacy" (69). As a wife, she should rather be looking forward to this. When he comes early, she deliberately delays going to bed so that she finds him in deep sleep and would not bother her about sex. "She crept

into bed as soundlessly as possible and lay as far as she could away from her husband” (97). Gari rules his household with an iron fist but in spite of all the fear he has instilled in Onai, she succeeds in standing up to him “in a rare moment of rebelliousness...no condoms, no intimacy” (69). Mlambo et al (2015:15), in reference to Onai’s bold steps observe that “these are steps never heard of in an African traditional set up and she [Onai] changes her identity from being a submissive and cultural wife to being a resolute and cunning wife.” She manages to resist this philandering husband in order to protect herself against HIV infection. This however, is against the womanhood expected by the patriarchal system and as a result Onai feels “her biggest failure as a wife lay in refusing Gari his conjugal rights...unless he agreed to use condoms” (69). This is in tandem with Gaidzanwa who asserts that “women may also feel guilty and apologetic once they behave out of the expectations imposed by the images of women” as outlined by the patriarchal system (Gaidzanwa, 1997:97). This is non-violent resistance that protects her in the end. In her thesis on selected women’s writings on HIV, Chitando (2011:154) says about Onai that her ‘biggest failure as a wife’ becomes her ‘greatest success as a woman,’ in reference to her insistence on condom use by her husband.

In her passive resistance, Onai makes use of the female condoms that make her “feel more in control of her sexuality and definitely less vulnerable to Gari’s demands. During his various degrees of drunkenness, he often failed to notice when she had a condom on” (70). This is witty of her as it preserves peace and still keeps her safe. “Such are acts of positive danger which should be applauded, even when the men feel threatened by their loss of control of women’s bodies” (Chitando, 2011:154). As she does this, Onai causes fissures in the patriarchal foundations and ensures her protection from HIV.

In the face of HIV, Katy realises that HIV has broken out of the mould of stereotypes to become everyone’s problem and it is no longer something that happens to other people. Katy packs condoms for her husband and this gives her security. He is a cross-border driver and hence belongs to the high risk group in terms of HIV infection. This is mainly because the remnants of the patriarchal system within her make it taboo for her to ask her husband to use condoms within their marriage. She feels this would undermine his status as her husband and she would not be able to stomach the repercussions. That being the case, she still has to protect herself. By giving him condoms, she takes control of her destiny.

Katy and Onai discuss HIV and empower each other to get tested for HIV. By so doing, the women face their fears and are able to express ownership and control of their bodies. In the discussion, the ladies begin to question certain aspects of their culture. They want to be able to negotiate with their men about everything related to their sexuality without starting a war. They discover however, that they lose their eligibility to negotiate when the men pay lobola and their parents are happy to accept it.

Overall, in matters relating to their sexuality, the women take different actions as forms of resistance with the varying degrees of success as discussed.

4.5 THE HOPE

After looking at all this, there is still need to check if there is hope of the reduction or total eradication of the negative demands of the patriarchal system.

4.5.1 The children

Gari's children, especially the daughters, exude much hope for the future. They have insight, passion and a form of justifiable anger that pushes them to take decisions and also influence their attitude. When thieves break into their house, Ruva later asks her mother "Amai, where is baba?" (4). By so doing she lays a demand and spells out her expectation that her father should have been around to protect and reassure the family. Young though she is, she shows great potential and maturity. One can almost tell that she will be a responsible and accountable adult.

When her mother is beaten by her father and gets injured, Ruva is filled with two types of anger: "Anger with her father for his violence, anger with her mother for allowing the situation to continue" (11). Young though she is, Ruva has seen already the loopholes in her parents and can see that if her mother wants it, she can stop this violence. Even when her father finally gets ill and is admitted, she still bears silent antagonism towards him and Onai does not know how to handle it. Again, at that young age, Ruva assesses the economic demise in the country and asks whether things will ever improve. She is at variance with the patriarchal system that has bred the prevailing situation. Her fierce independence is reassuring. She is equally determined

academically and has already set her eyes on going to university. She declares “it’s difficult *Amai* but I must pass” (196).

4.5.2 The married

The married in this text also show hope albeit under very difficult and trying circumstances. As has been discussed already, Onai and Katy give hope in the way they handle their sexuality, particularly in the face of HIV. Katy is empowered enough to introduce a paradigm shift where she packs condoms for her husband. By so doing, she takes charge and ownership of her body and yet “any other woman would have told her that her mind was unhinged, and that she was sanctioning infidelity” (244). In addition to that, these are thrifty women who do not sit on their laurels expecting handouts from their husbands.

The following are glimpses of courage shown by Onai as she negotiates life in her highly volatile marriage. Her life in this text represents a cross-section of the different circumstances that most women face. Not all women will face all these at the same time but many will be able to relate to one or more of her situations. In spite of the heavy clutches of the patriarchal system in her life, Onai, through the whole process, progresses knowingly and unknowingly towards independence as a person and especially as a woman.

Onai helps Mawaya, the Mbare vagrant and Gari gets jealous and angry. He raises his arm to strike her and her “fear swiftly and surprisingly transformed itself to anger. She decided to stare bravely at him, silently daring him to hit her” (90). Gari ends at that and does not proceed to hit her as usual. This is another form of resistance which shows how Onai has transformed into being such a brave woman who can stand against her husband’s violence. The emotion of anger spurs her on. Such behaviour is consistent with Ashcroft’s post-colonial resistance. Later on, when she wants to discuss with Gari the rumour about his affair with Gloria, she chooses a time when he is so drunk that she knows should a fight start, she has an upper hand. She also remembers how she has dared to hit him back in the past and managed to inflict a deep cut on the back of his head with the jagged handle of her pot. This goes to prove that though they may be suffering from the effects of negative patriarchal tendencies, women have not always been passive recipients of whatever the system put on their table.

When Gari does not come home one night, Onai gets worried. Her mind hovers over the possibility of Gari dying and she is shocked at her mental readiness of his death. This is a total departure from what the patriarchal system would expect from a woman. "In that transient moment, the darker side of her nature felt a glow of liberation." She realises another shocking truth that "His death could not harm them" (121-2). This is revelation that points at how independent she now is economically. She does not need a husband for sustenance as she has always been the effectual breadwinner.

At one point, Onai realises that she has been "too worn down by circumstances to do anything but try to circumvent and survive them. Now she felt she was going to act" (212). This resolve to act has been the missing link in her life and the fact that she finally gets to this stage gives much hope that she has a future.

When finally Gari dies, Onai fails to grieve. "She tried hard to summon grief; she wanted to cry for her husband, but the tears that were expected of her did not come" (238). "Onai's emotions were confused. She wanted to mourn her husband, but when she searched her heart, she found only anger, disappointment and a real sense of having been cheated by death" (239). Her system is truthful to itself and, though she may want to act according to culture, she fails to pretend.

This is reminiscent of Tambu in *Nervous Conditions* (1988) who fails to mourn her brother Nhamo precisely because of the injustices she endures. The same happens to Kauna in *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001) who deliberately refuses to mourn her husband and is vocal about it. She unashamedly displays her dry face and is ready to defend her stance by saying what is considered by hardcore patriarchy as ignominious and discomfiting: "I cannot lie to myself and to everybody else in this village. They all know how I was treated in my marriage. Why should I cry? For what? For my broken ribs? For my baby, the one he killed inside me while beating me? For cheating on me so publicly? For what? For what, Ali?" (Andreas, 2001:49).

Though the women referred to above have not been violent in their protest, yet in their resistance, they have made dents in the patriarchal system by defying the expected. This is consistent with Ashcroft's post-colonial resistance. All this goes to show that women have not always been passive recipients of whatever is thrown to them by the system. The domestic violence that they

have received from the people who must love them has caused serious transformation in their perception of themselves, their culture and the general environment around them. They have become such a formidable force that excluding them from issues relating to development is detrimental hence the STIWANIST call for the inclusion of African women in such endeavours.

During their first one-to-one discussion with Toro, the man indicates as if he is about to physically assault her, she springs up “ready to hit back and defend herself” (246). The once timid Onai has now amassed so much courage to defend herself against any form of physical violence. This again gives hope that the clutches of patriarchy are fast loosening.

When Onai and her children are chased away from the house by Toro, she seeks recourse from *Tete* Chipo and asks her to approach VaSolo, as culture would demand. She wants to go back to her house. Chipo, however, insults her instead of helping her. Onai declares that she will manage on her own and walks out of Chipo’s kitchen “with her children and her head held high. Never again, she vowed. Never again, would she leave herself so open to anybody’s mercy” (257). This declaration and her posture exude much hope and determination, the necessary ingredients in any successful endeavour. By so doing, she resists the expectations of society for a woman recently widowed who is usually at everybody’s mercy. She then resolves also that she does not want to return to that house. She is advised to fight for the house through the courts but her explanation is that she wants to be independent of her husband’s family. She would rather get registered on the housing list. She declares that she “would not let herself engage in confrontation. There was no need” (304). Her decision resonates with STIWANISM which proposes a non-confrontational approach in the fight for the redress of the socio-economic imbalances.

She declares her independence and freedom and becomes the one in full charge of her life. To further cement her independence, Onai declares to Katy “I’m through with men, Katy” (341). By so declaring, she is saying to other women that it not impossible to survive without a man in their lives. This resonates well with the desire of Amaka, the protagonist in *One is Enough* (1981), that the erroneous belief that without a husband a woman was nothing must be disproved.

“Onai felt more keenly than ever before that her destiny was now in her own hands” and this is the ultimate feeling for all hitherto oppressed women (363). Onai’s life is a statement that encourages

women not to give up no matter the circumstance they find themselves in. She gives hope and courage.

4.5.3 The single woman

The young and single women also give hope that the future is not lost for women. They also show their various ways in which they resist and circumvent the clutches of patriarchy. Onai notices the self-assuredness of Emily, the young female doctor. The patriarchal system is uncomfortable with women who are self-assured yet this is the breed that affirms that given an even environment, African women are competitive in any area of human endeavour.

Faith and Tom are young lovers. From the onset, Faith shows that she does not tolerate being considered second class because she is convinced that loving him does not mean she is a push over. She watches what happens to Onai and wonders why a woman should “allow herself to bear so much at the hands of a man” (26). She questions the act of paying bride price and again wonders if it reduces women to nothing more than a possession. This level of observation again gives us hope in this young generation. She vows that “if she ever married Tom, she would not allow herself to be his doormat. Never!” (26). The hope is that she will be able to conquer doubt and uncertainty, two traits identified as “corrosive agents” that hinder the progress of women (78).

Faith and Tom have differing views about the justification of Operation Murambatsvina. She feels that the government erred but Tom, using his advantage as a man, tells her not to speak like that. In pursuance of her resolve not to be Tom’s doormat, she asks why not and goes on to declare “That’s how I feel, Tom” (159). By this, she already sets the pace that in this relationship which may grow into a marriage, she will insist on her freedom to self-expression. Again this gives so much hope for the women in the society for it becomes apparent that self-expression is possible.

Melody is Faith’s best friend. Faith is worried about Melody’s relationship with Chanda and utters her concern. At first Melody is quite defensive but as soon as it dawns on her how she is injuring another woman in the relationship, she breaks up with Chanda and is free. She makes a conscious decision to right the wrong things in her life. She makes a U-turn as she finally realises that there is more dignity in begging than in engaging in transactional sex. This mindset shift reveals how empowered she is to take her own decisions about her life and still survive.

Previously, it has always been men to discuss and make decisions based observations of the socio-economic environment. However, the young doctors Emily, Tari and Ngoni engage in a serious and critical analysis of the current situation. This is yet another example of the paradigm shift where the futility of relegating women to the peripheries becomes obvious.

4.6 CONCLUSION

Though this text is a chronicle of “the unrelenting cycle of suffering” of Onai’s troubled life, it yields hope for the future (269). Tom observes correctly that “culture is not static” (315) and the hope for change is contained in this dynamism of culture. This agrees with Faith’s observation of “how traditions changed, and not always for the worse” (117). Later on, Faith again raises a concern where she feels that “the workings of society are designed to benefit men, at the expense of women” (236). Such an observation from one so young and a girl for that matter, gives much hope especially given the fact that she is studying Law. In her argument with Tom about Operation Murambatsvina, Faith displays analytic ability not consistent with what the patriarchy would expect from a girl. Her father has become a fugitive and is on the police wanted list because of his illegal dealings in foreign currency and also smuggling of girls into South Africa. Tom is adamant that he is a criminal. “But can’t you see that it’s the system, Tom?” she asks him (326). In her view, it is the system that has turned good people into criminals. She also knows that Tom buys foreign currency from the black market yet he sees criminality in the supplier and not in the buyer. He does not see his role in fuelling the practice that he so vehemently blames. It is such analytic powers that are the hope of the future.

In the patriarchal set up, “women’s voices are often silenced and are supposed to be heard only in the private domain of the home, while men operate in the foreground” (Nyanhongo, 2011:10). When Faith expresses her doubts about how Tom acquired his farm, they have a heated argument about the method used by most people to acquire farms where in most cases people have died in the process. Faith utters one of her most poignant statements which is pregnant with hope in the new breed of girls who will eventually become women. “Who will speak for the voiceless, if we all let fear crush us? I feel for these people” (162). By saying this, she pledges herself to be that voice. She also shows immense courage that will lead her to stand against the system in her advocacy for change.

There are some descriptions made in the text that are both symbolic and metaphoric. These display hope and are indicative of imminent change in the system. At the onset of Operation Murambatsvina, Onai chooses to destroy her shack. She does not allow the law enforcement agents to do so just in as much a way as she refuses legal help to repossess her dwelling place taken from her by Toro and just as she refuses to report Gari's violence to the police. "She struck a forceful blow against all the Garis of the world and against everything that threatened her existence" (142). This is highly symbolic especially as Gari is the epitome of patriarchy. Tagwira is here being prophetic that the retrogressive patriarchal elements will be destroyed by their victims who in this case are the women. In the process she is pierced by a splinter but does not feel the pain. She is so consumed by her act that she is "beyond physical pain" (143). This shows the type of sacrifice needed if emancipation of this magnitude is to be achieved.

After Gari's body has been lowered to the ground at his burial, Onai and her children throw handfuls of freshly-dug soil into the grave. "To Onai this act seemed doubly symbolic. She was burying a long, sad chapter of her life" (242). It signifies, to a great extent, the burial of the retrogressive aspects of patriarchy. This again gives hope for a future without domestic violence.

After Gari's death and after Onai has been dispossessed by Toro, she receives an outstanding bill from the hospital where Gari had spent time in the ICU. She is shattered by this and she goes by the window and looks outside. She observes dry leaves and scraps of paper as they are blown around in the dust and thinks "even they had an indefinable but free existence that appeared superior to hers" (308). This is an apparent foreshadow of her freedom to come. This gives her and the reader some assurance that freedom is achievable.

Onai eventually lands a job and on her trip to meet her employer, she passes through Africa Unity Square where jacaranda blooms float gracefully onto the violet carpet on the sidewalk. She treads on and closes her eyes briefly "savouring the beauty of the afternoon. This was splendour that she had looked for, and which she had not found" when she had come to the area before (354). This again is highly symbolic as it foreshadows the new life she is about to begin. Previously she has not found this splendour because the jacaranda had not yet bloomed but now, she is guaranteed of a real turn around in her fortunes. Her life is just blooming now, at age thirty-five.

When she finally gets to her new dwelling place which is her workplace she again stands by the window and reflects on her new circumstances. She vows to do the best for her children and determines that “they would not be oppressed by a system beyond their control,” which is the patriarchal system (363).

I concur with Chitando who postulates that “Tagwira offers the reader insights into patriarchy and its grip on women in Zimbabwe. However, these women are resilient and their efforts materialize in varied ways. Her debut novel constitutes a call to the women of Zimbabwe to press on, work hard and redefine their role in society in ways that promote their own liberation” (Chitando, 2011:129). Ashcroft’s post-colonial resistance emboldens the women to such levels of resilience because it produces the necessary transformation. The results, as shown in this text, are indeed varied but foster hope in the reader that with such resilience, socio-economic parity is attainable. The change in Onai, speaks of transformation. One of the major tenets of STIWANISM, namely the inclusion of women in social transformation, gets credence as Onai’s socio-economic status is bound to improve.

5 SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION

The three primary texts were successfully read through STIWANISM propounded by Morala Ogundipe-Leslie and also through Bill Ashcroft's notion of Post-colonial Transformation where the aspect of Resistance was the main focus. The two theoretical frameworks though from different perspectives, have a few common characteristics. They both sympathise with the woman, the supposed compromised or weak element of the man/woman binary, in whom they see suppressed potential. They fight for the cause of the weaker where Post-colonial Transformation proffers covert resistance and STIWANISM fosters inclusion in a non-confrontational manner.

The African women are the common denominator of the two theoretical frameworks and the hegemonic nature of patriarchy is the common enemy. It is this hegemony that has stifled the attainment of socio-economic parity of the genders. However, as evidenced in the preceding chapters, the African women's voices are becoming louder each day as they resist the forces that bind them viz patriarchy and the vestiges of colonialism. The analysis of the three primary texts has challenged the notion that women in Africa have been at the mercy of patriarchy since time immemorial. It has shown the various ways in which women have been involved in transformative initiatives in the African societies represented in these selected texts. The analysis has shown the various forms of resistance that the women have been involved in, in their bid to shake off the shackles of patriarchy.

Patriarchal tendencies, coupled with some vestiges of colonialism, are some of the tools that are used to enforce and promote the cultural and economic oppression of women. This has endeavoured to obliterate women's chances of attaining socio-economic parity with their male counterparts. The African women's various forms of resistance to these tools as evidenced in the three focus texts have attained some mileage in overturning the status quo. Upon the Sigauke family's return from England, Babamukuru plays the role of the colonizer over his household (Baharvandi, 2012:32). This observation then made the analogy between colonialism and patriarchy quite necessary in the discussion of the texts.

Colonialism sought to capture African people with potential so that they could be used for the benefit of the colonizers. The colonizers chose some particular people like Babamukuru among the natives and sent them to Europe in order to train them how to behave as their advocates in the colonized countries upon their return from the West (Baharvandi, 2012 :34). These beneficiaries accept whatever the colonizers say without any critical evaluation. Such a blind submission to the colonizers is what Nyasha warns Tambudzai about: "It's bad enough when a country gets colonized, but when the people do as well! That's the end, and really that's the end" (Dangarembga, 1988:150).

Nhamo and Babamukuru fall into this trap but the women characters Tambudzai and Nyasha manage to see it and refuse to be so mentally colonized. This is intellectual resistance that stems from their belief in racial and gender equality (Baharvandi, 2012:35). This resonates well with Ashcroft who avers that "the most sustained, far reaching and effective interpretation of post-colonial resistance has been the resistance to absorption" (Ashcroft, 2001:14). This is evident in Tambudzai especially because though she receives missionary education, she vows to MAXIMIZE on it but never to be changed by it. In her display of passive and subtle resistance, she refuses to be absorbed by the colonial and patriarchal systems thereby superseding Babamukuru and Nhamo who are the citadels of patriarchy who succumb to the enticement of colonialism. This shows hitherto unrecognised and unacknowledged female mental prowess and stamina hence the STIWANIST cry for the inclusion of African women in social transformation.

There are pertinent take-home issues that have emerged pursuant to this study. A critical observation that has emerged during the course of this study is that the existence of state-sanctioned and culture-ordained patriarchal hegemony has more negative than positive consequences. This justifies the necessity of studies such as this one to highlight the negative impact of such stereotypical views that have hitherto been reckoned as normal in some pockets of African communities represented by the target texts. The dire need for freedom forms the foundation of the antagonism between established boundaries and the style of existence of people and this need is a direct challenge to the language of domestic, cultural and state tyranny which is akin to a flimsy justification of the need for the preservation of the afore-mentioned hegemony. This therefore necessitates that the women have to understand

themselves and how they should regard themselves in the wake of the new world order since the world is fast becoming a global village.

Resistance which ossifies into simple opposition often becomes trapped in the very binary which imperial discourse uses to keep the colonised in subjection (Ashcroft, 2001:21). These are the overt and kamikaze forms of resistance, as employed by Nyasha, that have proven not to achieve the desired results. Hers has degenerated to opposition just for opposition's sake. She succumbs both mentally and physically as displayed by her mental derangement and emaciation of her body due to anorexia nervosa. Subtle or covert resistance has proven to be the most effective way with which to subvert the cultural and economic oppression. As Ashcroft quips, "it is these subtle and more widespread forms of resistance ...[that]... are most difficult for imperial powers to combat" (Ashcroft, 2001:20). Such resistance within the black African communities enables the black woman to redefine her identity and break free of the archaic, patriarchal traditional customs that restrict her and prevent her from realizing the self.

There is a great need to do away with the patriarchal dictates that seek to confine the African woman and hinder her progress and empowerment. This is necessitated by the fact that, as a result of these repressive conditions, the women that fail to resist, such as Nnu Ego and Onai in their initial stages, emerge as submissive, subservient and subordinate to the man and this deprives the nations of great potential of development and human resource in virtually every field of human endeavour. It emerges in the texts that given a fair playground, these characters can fare well and become productive individuals to be reckoned with. The majority of African woman, who for a long time have been relegated to the peripheries should now be catapulted to the fore and be given a chance to compete with her male counterpart as an equal. This will ensure the inclusion of African women in social transformation which is the main thrust of STIWANISM. The most outstanding feature of this inclusion is its non-confrontational nature.

As the three primary texts were being interrogated, it clearly emerged that the cause for the woman was being articulated by people with a global mandate and a clearly defined feminist approach; people who themselves have seen it, felt it and experienced it and have developed a loathing for the system hence their protests in their writings with such a passion. In these three texts, the African women have been informed of their multifaceted nature that has

hitherto been shrouded in the patriarchal mesh wire. It is hoped that they will take their rightful position and be effective as women and liberated from patriarchal restrictions. It is this consciousness of the protracted African women's quest for socio-economic parity that should propel the present day African woman to continue fighting on. Slowly but surely, the clutches of patriarchy are being loosened as women continue with their resistance.

Issues that have hitherto dogged the domestic amphitheatre have been unravelled in such a way that they have exposed the inherent sentiments of these authors which can possibly be representative of the generality of all those in the feminist movement, whether they are men or women. Marriage and all its facets has come under the spotlight. The analysis of the marriages in these three texts has indeed shown the need for a repositioning of marriage and the redefinition of the role of women in marriage.

The grooming of the girl child for marriage, as mentioned in the introduction, is a practice that comes under the microscope in the three texts and it is projected as a futile exercise that only seeks to secure men in their superior roles and maintain women in their ascribed inferior ones. Some women characters in the texts resist this and score success in their varying degrees. Adaku decides to be a single mother and has great promise for her girl children. Melody deliberately gets entangled with a married man with the full knowledge that they will not get married but she will reap financial benefits from the relationship.

Coupled with these issues is the issue of singleness which is effectively dealt with in *Nervous Conditions* where women are empowered to express their sexuality independently and not to present themselves as men's toys. Lucia exercises her sexuality outside marriage. She educates herself, gets a job and falls pregnant outside marriage. It is the woman who has the upper hand and she is the one who chooses who to stay with and when to leave them without losing face.

Childlessness, child-bearing and child-rearing are issues brought out where women have resisted age-old traditional beliefs and have adopted the current trends where the women have taken it upon themselves to take ownership of their bodies and be the ones to decide when to have babies, how to bring them up and also how to have children even if they may not be biologically theirs.

Domestic violence is an issue not to be tolerated, condoned or endured. Women are encouraged not to suffer in silence and to expose all perpetrators without fear of tradition. Interventions such as The Musasa Women Project are necessary support groups that are a necessity for psycho-social support of the women still subjected to the evils of patriarchy so that they get empowered.

Legally stipulated and traditionally prescribed inheritance practices are challenged and portrayed in such a way that it demeans the champions of such (who are usually men) especially as they strip women of everything that they would have worked for in their marriages. Corporate ownership is proposed in a subtle manner especially in the event of the husband's death in a union where children are.

Whereas extant literature has always presented men characters as strong and witty whilst the female characters have been the opposite, the three narratives challenge the credence of this supposition by projecting men who are highly questionable in integrity. Babamukuru, the luminary in the Sigauke family, is highly patriarchal in approach and displays serious faults of assumption in his dealings with his nuclear family as well as the extended family. When he is dislodged from his patriarchal comfort zone by his wife's protests and challenges, he is at a loss and does not know how to handle her or respond. Nnaife is portrayed as a spineless man who fails dismally to adjust to change and is shamefaced and incarcerated. Garikayi is presented as just a male who is nothing more than the biological father to his children. There is no fatherhood in him even by patriarchal standards.

The three authors manage to highlight issues critical to the attainment of socio-economic parity. Communities have to be aware of the clutches of patriarchy that include stereotyping, grooming, the marriage institution and the issues of barrenness and motherhood. African women have to cherish virtues such as unity, thrift and entrepreneurship, self-expression, freedom of sexuality, ownership of their bodies and self expression. These virtues, as perceived in this study, are the gateway to the accomplishment of absolute socio-economic parity. African women need not become violent physically or verbally for them to be heard but they can achieve much through the various forms of passive and subtle resistance as proven in this study. The two theoretical frameworks, STIWANISM and Bill Ashcroft's Post-colonial Transformation, can be used to establish the African women's movement towards socio-economic parity. Since it has been ascertained that the quest for socio-economic parity

is not a new phenomenon to African women, more current fictional texts can be read through them to determine how far societies have gone in allowing women to be who they are in every area of human endeavour without limiting them because of their gender.

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