

**QUEST FOR IDENTITY IN BAYO ADEBOWALE'S *LONELY DAYS* AND
AMMA DARKO'S *FACELESS***

BY

**Faustina Chinasa OKEKE (Miss)
ART1800606**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERATURE
FACULTY OF ARTS
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
BENIN CITY**

SEPTEMBER 2023

**QUEST FOR IDENTITY IN BAYO ADEBOWALE'S *LONELY DAYS* AND
AMMA DARKO'S *FACELESS***

BY

**Faustina Chinasa OKEKE (Miss)
ART1800606**

**AN ORIGINAL ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
ENGLISH AND LITERATURE, FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF
BENIN, BENIN CITY. IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF ARTS (B.A)
DEGREE IN ENGLISH AND LITERATURE, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN.**

SEPTEMBER, 2023

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project titled: Quest for Identity in Bayo Adebowale's Lonely Days and Amma Darko's faceless was undertaken by Faustina Chinasa OKEKE (Miss) of the Department of English and Literature, University of Benin, Benin City under my supervision.

Dr. Lilian Onyeiwu
(Project Supervisor)

Date

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to God Almighty for His unfailing love and protection towards me throughout the course of my study in the University of Benin, to my lovely father Mr. Jude Okeke and to caring and supportive husband Mr. basil anadi

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My profound gratitude goes to my Creator, He saw me through it and I have completed my journey in this great citadel of learning University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State.

My thanks is going to my project supervisor Dr. Lilian Onyeiwu for her understanding and support during the course of this project, for always being ever ready to give answers to my questions whenever I need one even if it's not convenient for her. I appreciate you ma.

My heartfelt thanks goes to my loving parents Mr. and Mrs. Jude Okeke for their love, advice and support to me.

To Mrs. Efobi and all my lecturers in the Department of English and Literature, I am who I am today because of the teaching I received and the guidance through my dark days.

My deep appreciation goes to my wonderful husband, the one after my heart, Mr. Basil Anadi. Thank you for believing in me and for loving me unconditionally. I will forever love you sweetheart.

To my lovely mother Mrs. Theresa Kenechi. Thank you for your countless effort towards me and for encouraging me always.

To my loving sister Vivian you always know what to say to me always you are the best and also to my brother Chibueze I love you dear.

And lastly to my wonderful friends Favour, Jonathan, Esther, Blessing, Jennifer, George, Patrick just to mention a few for making my stay a wonderful and amazing one. Also to all my roommates, I love you all you people have a special place in my heart.

ABSTRACT

Gender as a broad concept has been discussed from several pivots. While some scholars focus on the meaning, origin and proponents, some examine the movements in support of the concept while a host of others oppose the motion. However, much emphasis has not been placed on the concept of quest for identity by African women in the African society perhaps as a result of the limitation of scholarly interest in the concept. This essay, through the feminism theory, examines the quest for identity of African women with focus on issues related to the African woman and her society. Issues like single parenting, the pursuit for self-identity, dominance and oppression from the male gender, resistance, self-awareness and the quest for equality. This emphasis is to show that while some African women still dwell in the stet of African culture others have become vicious enough to rebel against it and make attempt to stand out. Amma Darko's *Faceless* and Bayo Adebowale's *Lonely Days* are use as the primary texts. case study.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

The influence of culture on gender issues especially in the African society cannot be undermined. Historically, and even in the contemporary world, one's sexual identity and value is attached to societal dictations, boundaries, dos and don'ts even at the expense of one's peace, comfort, association and liberty. Although, geographical confines differ, the subject of gender as how it is stated by culture and Socio-Political is a deliberate and trending issue. The way the concept of female gender (sex) has been presented and perceived in most societies has given the male gender the license to treat women as lowly beings_ less than humans, as though women are invisible. Notwithstanding, a critical historical tracing will reflect women who didn't give in to the seduction and molestation of their gender by the influence of patriarchy. While some took the bull by the horn, others cower, either because of fear or cluelessness in the act of exonerating themselves from the grip of patriarchy. Hence, it is on this plane that it is necessary to discuss the several forms of travails the women folk particularly in Africa undergo usually from cradle to grave.

1.1 Purpose of Study

This essay attempts to critically examine the subject of the quest for identity of African women paying attention to Amma Darko's *Faceless* and Bayo Adebowale's

Lonely Days. It will look at the issue of single parenting especially by the women, the pursuit for self-identity, dominance and oppression from the male gender, resistance, self-awareness and the quest for equality in order to show that female folk have awoken to the consciousness of their place and role in the African society, even the world at large.

1.2 Scope of Study

Irrespective of the normalcy of the subject of the bias in gender treatment and sexual subjugation of the women folk and how it has been discussed from several perspectives, this essay is limited to the discussion of the quest for identity of African women. The major female characters in Amma Darko's *Faceless* and Bayo Adebowale's *Lonely Days* will be used as the case study.

1.3 Research Methodology

This essay adopts the qualitative method of research. The primary texts used for this essay are Amma Darko's *Faceless* and Bayo Adebowale's *Lonely Days*. Secondary sources include journals, magazines, Ebooks, online materials, articles and textbooks.

1.4 Theoretical Background

The feminist theory is chosen to be appropriate for the discussion of the topic of this research. The principal motif behind the feminism theory is the tussle for equal

treatment of the female gender across all sectors: cultural, political, legal, and socio-economic with the intention of redefining womanhood and give unto her rights. This struggle for gender equality has lasted since the eighteenth century. The theory was first and prominently launched by a host of seminal texts including Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869), Simone de Beauviour's *The Second Sex* (1949), and Kate Miller's *Sexual Politics* (1969). The theory was inaugurated in the 1960s and gained popularity across the literary world in the 1970s. There are a number of notions that hold up feminism theory but according to Elizabeth Woledge, feminist critics, first, believe that "the Western society is patriarchal and as such subjugates women. Secondly, sex is biological and natural while gender is cultural and nurtural". Thirdly, traditional literature and its critical standard are masculinist or androcentric. Consequently, feminist criticism functions to explore patriarchal cultures and reorder the perception and participation of literary enterprise to include the woman's perspective" (1). Principally, feminism is geared towards the reconstruction of the bastardised image of the woman and there perceptions the society has of her. Virginia Woolf is acknowledged as an important pioneer in feminist criticism and her thoughts are advanced in the seminal essay, "A Room of One's Own."

To ascertain the truism of the concept of feminism therefore, a historical approach to flush out evidence is the best judge of the struggle for equality, equity

and dominance between the conservative male opposition and the female counterpart. A satisfactory response to the issue of feminism can only be given with a deliberate reference into history which has a reason behind every approach in any field of study. The history of feminism is clearly the history of women spirit, and women relationships that are popularised and degraded. It is also the memoirs of the several fair and unfair quests of women to comprehend their experiences per time, in relation to their society and the world they find themselves. In George Ukagba's postulation, "unlike other bias thought of the concept, it is the quest of women to find order and unity in the multiplicity and diversity that surround them" (30) rather than equality or dominance that is labelled of them. It is further the movement of women in dire need to liberate themselves and the entire women folk from cultural imprisonment, domestic violence, male overrated dominance, religious tyranny, social imbalance, economic marginalisation and political negligence of the male gender.

Feminism can either be liberal, radical, Marxist or cultural. By liberal, it means the quest for equality and recognition by the male counterpart across different sectors is done through negotiation without any intention to cause rifts and contentions. Radical feminism takes a step further to advocate for equality and recognition through acts like protests, open confrontations, lobbying and the sort repeatedly until the voice of the oppressed is heard. Marxist feminism is a clamour for the relevance of women in the socio-economic sectors.

Cultural feminism, which is the major approach for this essay, attempts to preach the liberation of women from cultural dictates and bondage as sustained by the patriarchal structure of a society. It takes a look at the way women approach the world and also the need for the world to attach significance to the approach. This is because emphasis has been over-placed on the men's value over the years. To a large extent, the purpose of this approach is to bind all women. Typically, this kind of feminism is of the view that men and women are not treated the same in all situations; there is gender preference and biased treatment of the feminine gender. Summarily, cultural feminism agrees notwithstanding that the place and role of men are different from that of women but emphasises more on the female value in the society. Thus, it advocates for the accommodation of women as the least way to show gratitude to them as caregivers and unpaid labourers.

There is also the snail-sense feminism, which is often used by Akachi Ezeigbo. She writes using most of her major female characters to depict a snail-sense feminism where they are first presented as weak and helpless characters but become dynamic towards the end of the narrative, and acquire freedom from masculinity in the most unexpected form.

In Watkins, Rueda and Rodriguez's view "feminism is about challenging the division of labour in the world that puts men in charge of the public sphere- works, sports, wars, government - while women slave away and unpaid in the home,

carrying the whole burden of family life" (3). Mary Daily, a radical feminist philosopher and theologian says feminism is a "way of being characterised by (a) an awesome and ecstatic sense of otherness from patriarchal norms and values, (b) conscious awareness of the sad society's sanctions against radical feminists, (c) moral outrage on behalf of women as women, (d) commitment to the cause of women that persists, even against the current, when feminism is no longer 'popular'"(16).

However, in a more straight-to-the-point manner, Akachi Ezeigbo writes that "feminism is just one of the many components of post modernist views of cultural life that have been used to interpret literary texts and theories literature" (3). She goes further to say that it "became popular because of its consciousness-raising and combative proclivities and its emphasis on issues relating to human rights" (3). Feminism is the offshoot of reconstructing a misplaced ideology of women as subordinate beings. It was said to have begun the moment women became consciously alerted of a spiraling chauvinism over their thoughts, views and opinion. However, it took many centuries for the platforms and groups to be large and effective enough to counter a long-existing and culturally incepted ideology_ patriarchy.

Historically, the concept had no voice or recognition during the 'feudal past'; not until when the European societies had restrictions to 'feudal system' in the 18th

century. Industrialisation and urban cities development began to bring about the need to 'separate the chaff from the wheat. Men became more of workers while females became the home restricted types. Hence, the notion of men as "breadwinners" and women as mere "housewives" surfaced thereby a class separation and standard. The growth of Industrialisation bred several philosopher-thinkers with different ideologies and explication of what a society should look at. In the same vein, women too began to poise mind bulging but unnoticed perhaps unattended questions of their subjugation and unequal treatment by the male gender. They also arose to question and rebel against the tyrannical outburst of men in the society. In one of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's works on education in Emile, he said: "men and women are made for each other, but their mutual dependence is not equal. We could survive without them better than they could without us. They are dependent on our feelings, on the prize we put on their merits, on the value we set on their relation to men. To please men, to be useful to them, to win their love and respect, to raise them as children and care for them as adults, console them, make them lives sweet and pleasant" (67). The strands of degradation and male dominance spotted in Rousseau's paper ignited an impetus to the feministic reaction of some women (group) or (individual). Mary Daly in reaction to Rousseau's paper exposed the make-up of patriarchy which the latter wrote in favour. She said of patriarchy that it is "a society manufactured and controlled by males, fatherland. A society in which every legitimated institution is entirely in the hands of males, and a few selected hence

women. A society which is characterised by oppression, expression, narcissism, necrophilia, joyless society ruled by God father, son and company; society fixated on proliferation, propagation and procreation, and bent on the destruction of all life."(16). However, philosophers of the era wrote in different ways to explore the issue of women subjugation. In his essay "On Liberty", John Stuart Mill discussed that individual freedom births happiness. That is, the happiness of every man including woman depends on his/her freedom. His aim of writing this: "legal subordination of one sex to the other is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hinderances to human improvement...it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality" (110) was to remedy the abuse of women. His intention was to give a new name to the practices and notions that denied women equal educational opportunities and access on merit to all influential statuses, offices and positions, even occupation. He concludes by saying: "History tells us a good deal about what women can do, because women have done it. It tells us nothing about what they can't do and it never will until they routinely given the opportunity." (110)

The turn in of another centuries_ 18th and 19th, brought about a stronger, deeper and radical phase to the concept of feminism. Hence, feminism spread into two eras, more appropriately called waves. The first wave of feminism which spanned from the late 18th century through early 19th century focused more on matters concerning the legality of women, especially their enfranchisement (voting right), and included noteworthy accomplishment in the United States the vote for women in 1922. The

second wave of feminism which can be said to have evolved in 1949 still pervades every society and literary work in the contemporary society. Simon de' Beauvoir's book entitled *The Second Sex* ushered in this latter wave. The second wave shifted focus to more of personal issues, individual perception and interpretation of gender treatment towards the female folks.

Wollstonecroft (1759-97) was one of the earliest feminists who portrayed a fitting picture of an "ideal woman" of her era. In her own introspection, she "suggested that women who have no other ambition than to inflame passions will have no real strength of character, no true moral virtue, and no inner resources" (Ukagba: 33-34). It was time, she affirmed for women to be reinstated and their dignity restored by encouraging better ideas of womanhood and a fair placement of their folk in any given society. The French Revolution offered women a chance to do away with the old conditions on a social level, not just an individual one. Another spark therefore was ignited on the rage of the concept. The bourgeoisie (women) of Paris took the bull by the horn in the gospeling of a resuscitated women folk. A six-thousand-protesting crowd marched on the Town Hall of Paris demanding cheaper bread, bearing a slogan that read: "Oh women...deploy all the energy of your character and you will soon see these haughty men, not grovelling at your feet. As servile adorers but proud to share the treasures of the Supreme Being" (16).

Summarily, the exploitation of the creative efforts of African feminists over the years concartenates the notion of feminism into a tripartite ideology. That, first, feminism challenges the relations between men and women; that feminism revolts against any and every patriarchal structures, organisations, model and principles that subjugates and degrades woman to be less human, and that feminism is a collaborated effort of women to demand their full rights as humans too.

To this course, it is on the dimensions of this theoretical framework that this essay draws strength and guide in discussing the subject of the quest for identity of African women, especially widows paying attention to Amma Darko's *Faceless* and Bayo Adebawale's *Lonely Days*.

1.5 Review of Related Scholarship

Amma Darko's *Faceless* has been widely appreciated by a handful of critics propagating several opinions and observations concerning it. Some of these evaluations centre on character analysis, some focus on the themes while a few others anchor on contextual analysis of the text with emphasis on language use. The focus of this aspect, however, is to review relevant submissions on the text as connected with the topic of this essay. To start with, Felicia Annin in her paper entitled "A Critical Overview of Amma Darko's *Faceless*- a Review", submits that:

Several issues are raised in this novel. The issues are pertinent in our society and Darko, being a keen observer of human life has painstakingly written about them to expose the wrongs in the society and the moral lessons to be learnt from this piece of writing...Darko recounts the alarming situation of the complex details of street children and slum life in Accra with a fourteen year old girl Fofa being a victim of streetism.(81)

From Annin's point of view, the major focus of Darko in her text is the life of streetism; that is, she mirrors the daily lives of children on the street of Accra but the society at large, and their ordeals especially the girl child. To her, one of the essence of the text is call attention to the alarming increase of negligence that results to the expulsion of these children from their homes into the street, where they meet even worst situations.

Concerning *Faceless*, Maina Ouarodima in her essay comments that:

Darko informs her readers and society, at large, that the African women's conceptualization of freedom is not based on the erosion of her feminine attributes and outlook but in her ◀ability▶to go to school, to work, to voice her opinions (her likes and dislikes). For such basic needs to be effective, Darko utters a wake- up call to the government, which has a tremendous role to play in it. The government should not

lose its priorities and become deaf to the cries of the victims (women). As a result, both men and women should shoulder responsibilities and work jointly for the benefit of a society without dis-crimi-na-tion. (1705)

In the above excerpt, Ouarodima establishes first, that there is an imprisonment of the female gender as a result of the patriarchal structure of the typical African society. However, the liberation technique of this gender is not installed in their physique; rather, in their abilities which is educational. Hence, the government should put herself to use by helping the feminine gender to maximise what they have installed in them so as to foster peaceful and fair cohabitation of both gender.

In an article entitled "Literacy and the Girl-Child Empowerment for Sustainable Development: A Study of Amma Darko's Faceless" written by Itang E. Egbung and Jayne Owan, they both comment that:

In Amma Darko's Faceless, the girl-child Fofo is empowered by a group of educated women who rehabilitate her from streetism to a meaningful lifestyle through a profession (catering) which will enable her contribute to the wellbeing of her family in particular and the development of the society in general. (11)

Here, Egbung and Owan portray the empowerment of the girl-child which is intended to save her from the entrenchment of the life of the street. The empowerment is a ploy to also restructure and reshape the girl-child to be independent and useful to herself and her family at large.

Daniel T. Yokossi however gives a different perspective to the novel. Unlike other critics who anchor more on the streetism life and the subjugation of the feminine gender, he opines that:

Amma Darko has not just contented herself with criticizing men's wickedness only. She also finds fault with women themselves. Examining some of her characters' statements, one understands that a large number of women nowadays are enduring ill-treatments and suffering tortures from their husbands because of themselves. (125)

Bayo Adebowale's *Lonely Days* has also enjoyed some scholarly evaluations overtime. Some of them that are relevant to this essay are reviewed below. According to Aminu Bashir in an article entitled "Culture as Tool of Widow's Plight in Africa: A Study of Bayo Adebowale's *Lonely Day* ",

Lonely Days is a tale that exposes the unsavoury traditions and rituals that widows in Africa are made to endure. By describing Yerimi and other widows from Kufi village and their traumatic and agonizing

experiences after losing their spouses, the author exposes this cruel custom. (63)

Bashir reveals the haunting and hunting effect of certain traditional and ritual practices that become some sort of imprisonment for the African widows who have no choice but to endure it however terrible it makes them feel. They are reduced to chicks at the mercy of the hawk. The end product of most of these widows is agony and trauma.

Onipede Festus Moses carries out a critical discourse analysis of the novel and submits that:

It is about the plight of widows in Africa, most especially Adeyipo in Akinyele Local Government Area of Oyo State. The four widows (Dedewe, Radeke, Fayoyin and Yaremi) suffer maltreatment and deprivations, because they are widows. The widows are forced to sing dirges and confess sins they did not commit. The widows are also forced to pick 'a new cap' which means a new husband on Cap-Picking Day. (111)

From Moses' submission, we are exposed to the inhumane treatments that widows especially in the Yoruba culture with specificity to Oyo State are subjected to. They are denied their will to mourn their dead husbands the way they would have

loved to; they deprived the moments of solitary with the spirit and soul of their departed husbands; they subjected to all kinds of maltreatment that comes with the title of a 'widow' such as confessing to the fact that it is their excess sins that killed their husbands. To make it worse, they are denied the privilege to choose if to remarry or not, and even if they choose to remarry, when.

A submission by C. B. Ike and O. S. Akujobi in the article, "Widowhood in *Lonely Days: Unsung Casualties*" holds that:

Lonely Days takes on a different path of story line, choosing to focus on the plight of widows in Kufi. Yaremi is singled out as the central character, or the point of attraction. It is through Yaremi that the widowhood practices in *Lonely Days* are better exposed and explored. Aside Yaremi, there are also other characters that are used to represent these widowhood practices and how they play their roles in the lives of these women.... Through the actions and interactions of the characters, these widowhood practices are made known to the readers. (117)

Ike and Akujobi focus more on the narrative of widowhood in the text. They reveal how Adebowale uses his novel to highlight the cruel situations that widows in Africa especially the Yoruba backdrop undergo at the detriment of their sanity and

identity. Rather than sympathise with them, the society ride on the wings of tradition to afflict the widows.

1.6 Thesis Statement

This essay evaluates the breach of the identity of Women in African culture.

CHAPTER TWO

IDENTITY AND AFRICAN CULTURE

Introduction

Although every part of the world has its culture, the African culture is the main focus in this essay. The African culture is that which is laced with the development of self and identity because the society believes that one's identity or self is one's true definition and exhibition. It is who one is and projects that the society accepts and judge or let be. The identity of a person can also be a response of his or her psychology framework, which according to Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical depiction makes up the larger part of a man. In Bayo Adebowale's *Lonely Days* and Amma Darko's *Faceless*, we see how identity plays out in terms of single parenthood in Africa and how identity plays out in terms of Widowhood and Discrimination in *Lonely Days*.

2.1 Single Parenthood in African Tradition

In the typical African tradition, the idea of single parenthood does not occur as a result of divorce because in such society, marriage is respected and held as sacred. The spouses, especially the woman, are taught to endure whatever the outcome is. The only reason that can lead to single parenthood in Africa is if a spouse's husband or wife dies. However, other issues like separation or desertion can

lead to single parenthood in Africa. Whatever the case may be, it comes with its woes and burdens. Some of the burdens that lie on the shoulders of especially the woman as a single mother is having to deal with financial obligations, emotional balance, the social acceptability as a result of an absent father, to mention but a few. In fact, to a large extent, the single mothers are hunted with loneliness, struggle for identity and the fear of what the future holds for her and offspring. On the part of a single father, there is less effect of these factors on him because the typical African man is naturally installed with strength and resilience to handle difficult task and mete out discipline and wise counsel at any given time. This is a manifestation of the patriarchal structure of the African society. However, the presence of both parents in child rearing makes the struggles and weight of parenting less unbearable. Summarily, single parenting, with Africa in view is more tedious than double parenting. Some instances to portray this submission in Adebowale's *Lonely Days* are evidential below. Yaremi, the major character and tragic hero of the text loses her husband, Ajumobi, the great hunter to natural death just at the opening of the novel. She thence has to cope with loneliness and the inappropriate reactions she gets from the villagers as a whole. Before her husband's demise, her grown children: Segi, Alani and Wura live in different locations far away from her. But her husband's demise creates a vacuum in her; thus, the narrator tells us that:

Now alone in the world, Yaremi was left to prepare heaps and raise crops, all by herself- laboring hour after hour, under the sweltering

heat. She had to cut the bushes around the family compound to uproot cassava tubers to feed her goats with. She will linger all day alone in the sun, to dry maize grains for an evening meal of delicious porridge and melon stew (5)

From the excerpt above, the reader is first introduced to the height of loneliness that Yaremi has to deal with as a result of her husband's demise, and the new life she is introduced to; a life that is structurally meant for men. The absence of Ajumobi becomes the advent of Yaremi's burdensome life. This is implicitly depicted by the author because aside Yaremi's hidden strength, the need to tend for her only grandchild, Woye becomes her priority. Woye's parents, Segi and Wande both live in Olode (14). He would stay with his grandmother for one year (129) and later start his formal educational life at Anglican Junior Primary School, Olode (129).

Another instance of the issue of single parenting in *Lonely Days* is captured when Woye falls ill suddenly thereby setting Yaremi on her heels. Aside being laden with the allegation of killing her husband, here is Woye, her only grandson whose illness can earn a bad name forever or even banishment if something bad happens to the boy. It, therefore, creates fear in Yaremi's mind. The narrator recounts that:

Yaremi lay Woye on an old mat and draped a thick *kijipa* over him. She warmed his hands on a clay mug of hot water. The little boy was too short of breath to breathe through his nose. So, he held his tongue

up to the roof of the mouth and let out the entrapped air with the deep noise of flute Yaremi disguised in panic laughter. She sat Woye down to face the steam from the pot cooking on the fire Yaremi applied paraffin ointment to Woye's body to suppress the little swellings which had formed on the boy's face, like small pimples on the skin of an orange. And he yelled to be released (79-80)

From the foregoing, we are presented with a single-guardian-parenting ordeal where Yaremi is worried because of Woye's illness. We see her doing everything possible to ensure that Woye gets back to his feet which the author describes to be dithered weakly (80). The effort put together by Yaremi in this scenario is an overloaded task she faces. Ajumobi, her husband ought to be the one to do all of these as the man. Getting herbs from the forest, boiling them and making the sick child take them ought to solely be the man's duty. But his absence as a result of his demise makes Yaremi take on such duty. Hence, the burdens and troubles of single parenting are portrayed as very tasking activities and cannot be handled by any single parent. Beyond the picture of the troubles and saga tied to ensuring health in the excerpt above, the author shows us Yaremi's major fear and reason for springing to quick action without hesitating. He says:

But the little boy must not die! Yaremi very well knew this. Her eyes became misty and tear-laden. Her spirit sank to depressing depth. She

looked up at the empty sky for succour. When none came, she began to distress herself with morbid thoughts. The whole of Kufi would be on her if Woye should die, and be ready to lynch her, like a self-confessing hag. Those who lead the attack to lynch were very much around, warming up, waiting for the opportunity which had eluded them when Ajumobi died. (81)

Having known the implication of whatever Woye's sickness may arouse from villagers, Yaremi does everything possible to keep him alive. However, if Ajumobi did not die, and Woye became ill, it will be regarded as an ordinary ailment but since Ajumobi is dead and Yaremi is labeled to have killed him, it will be a case of dead end for her.

Again, in the discussion of the context of single parenthood in Africa, either of the single guardian-parent has to solely input morality into the child, teaching him or her how to cultivate simple domestic skills and other necessary activities that make up the daily existence of such child in an African society. Yaremi is seen grooming Woye to become a responsible and hardworking man. She encourages Woye saying:

Go on Woye, she always urged. Go on playing the number game with your mallet. Go on beating a steady tempo on the taffeta cloth. That's one sure way to remove boredom, and one way to make your work

lighter. Don't stop, Woye. Make sure your hand moves faster than your tongue◀ (9)

Perhaps, the presence of Ajumobi will groom Woye in a more manly way than the pounding of taffeta. He will go to hunt with him, gather log of woods on his shoulders, sit in his chamber to hear the great stories of his ancestors and the heroic deeds of his fathers so that he (Woye) too can become great.

In Amma Darko's *Faceless*, single parenthood manifests in several forms and different homes. Furthermore, in the text, parenting by one spouse alone can be more dangerous and unfruitful. However, this is not the case in Adebowale's *Lonely Days* where we see Yaremi groom Woye until he leaves for school in the city. The first instance of single parenting results from abandonment. Kwei, Maa Tsuru's escapee-husband, and father of her four children abandons Maa Tsuru and their two (unnamed) sons while she is pregnant with Baby T who will later be born, due to the increasing financial burdens which at the time become unbearable for him. Unable to manage this problem, he initiates beating his wife as a technique to get rid of the child in her womb then. After failed attempts, he disappears from the marriage leaving Maa Tsuru to fend for herself and the two sons including the unborn child. We see that:

Maa Tsuru had been without a man since Kwei disappeared from their lives. She wasn't in any regular job either. Following the death of her

aunt in whose kenkey business she was employed, she only contended herself with odd jobs now and then. She would work a few days at a kenkey house or do people's washing for a fee. She never stayed on one job.... (128-129)

From the excerpt above, we see the challenges Maa Tsuru faces after Kwei disappears as a result of increasing financial burdens. Meanwhile, the love of a mother and perhaps a bit of the survivalist syndrome energises her to get to do different menial jobs because the children must survive. This is also the case of many single mothers today who do not take serious part in family planning and child birth control. The men, most times being frustrated, run away to escape this challenge. In the same vein, some single mothers today can be said to be the cause of their predicaments. Some cannot stand their ground as regards what they want. They accept anything and any man in a bid to shift the society's judgmental lenses away from them. Social commentaries are more important to them than their own peace of mind and sanity. For instance, after Kwei elopes, Maa Tsuru gets engaged to Kpakpo a lazy drunk who deceives her that he is a worker in an aluminum factory in Tema. His presence sends her two sons into the street, and not too long she becomes pregnant for him. Having detained in the hospital as a result of premature labour, Kpakpo, the children's supposed 'step-father' defiles Baby T and also disappears afterwards. Hence, we see that sometimes, single parenting is a result of self-interest.

For instance, Maa Tsuru becomes selfish from the first night her new lover comes home at the expense of her own children's comfort. After her two sons left the house,

Maa Tsuru could have gone to look for her sons. She decided not to. She had noticed them toss and turn on their mats the whole night through. They saw it all. For how long could that go on? Better let them go. They were no longer kids. The streets had accelerated their growth. It was time for them to be on their own. (131)

The presence of a father figure creates a balance in a home. The two sons will not take to the street for survival if a responsible father is present. Maa Tsuru's selfish decision ruins the bond between her and her children. Also, lack of observation and strong will, and over dependence on the other spouse for survival are factors that can result to single parenthood. Maa Tsuru ends up having her home shattered by the presence of the two men she is in love with because of this factor.

In addition, single parenthood in African Tradition sometimes ends in disaster. This is evident in Darko's text. In Adebowale's *Lonely Days* where we see Yaremi trains and sustains Woye until he is mature enough to go to school. Segi, Woye's mother sees in her son the evidence of improvement in morals, speaking and composure upon her arrival which proves him to have undergone good parenting even though by an old widow, a single guardian-parent. On the other hand, the instances of single parenting in *Faceless* proves it to be a disastrous process because

they all fail at the end thereby resulting to an adoption of a life of streetism by the neglected children. An instance of this again is in Odarley's case. She is also one of the children on the street who is sent away from home by her mother who is before now abandoned by her husband, Odarley's father. Dina, another child on the street details Kabria, the MUTE's activist as to why Odarley leaves home:

Odarley? She is still there at Sodom and Gomorrah. She didn't leave home. She was sacked. By her own mother. She sacked her like a fowl. She said Odarley was troublesome. That Odarley was stealing her money. She is a bad mother. She just didn't want Odarley around after Odarley's father left her for another woman and she too found another man. (103)

Two things are deductible from the excerpt above. One, the absence of a father-figure fertilises Odarley's stealing tendencies which irritates the mother. Two, the pain of abandonment Odarley's mother feels is also transferred to her daughter. She takes on another man, and in a bid to start a new life and enjoy herself with her new man she sends her daughter away. Beyond the disgust she feels for her daughter's tendencies and the negligence by her own husband, it can be interpreted that she escapes the burden of single parenthood by sending her daughter into the streets. Another instance is seen in the case of the boy at opening pages of the novel. He recounts his home experience with the girl he finds on the street too:

Whenever I visit her, she doesn't let me stay long before she asks me politely to leave. She never has a smile for me. She is always in a hurry to see my back. Sometimes I cannot help thinking that maybe she never has a smile for me because the man she made me with, that is my Father, probably also never had a smile for her. One day she said to me, 'Go. You do not belong here.'.... She worries about the food that she has. It is never enough. So she worries that it may not suffice for her two new children if I joined the lot. (2)

From the foregoing, we see an abandoned boy spelling out the unruly treatment meted out to him by his own mother who speaks from the depth of the pain of an abandoned woman too. She does not want to see him anymore at home. First, she moves on with another man and bears two children for him. Second, she neglects her motherly role and perhaps the fear and burden of single parenting make her drop her obligations to her child, and focus on the her children whose father is present with her. Single Parenthood, hence, becomes a really tasking process that can succeed in one society but fail in another society in Africa.

2.2 Widowhood and Discrimination

Widowhood in Africa comes with several perceptions that are not only stereotypical but also harsh. These perceptions are not situated in one society in Africa; it cuts across all societies. For instance, in the Igbo community, they say 'Di

bụ ugwu nwanyị’, translated to mean ‘husband constitutes honour and dignity to womanhood’. The saying simply implies that when the husband of a woman dies, or is no more, the dignity of such a woman is lost because it is believed that a woman's husband is her dignity and everything that makes her womanly is the presence of her husband. The Igbos also hold a notion that a woman's husband is the god that owns her. Technically, men in this community are indirectly deified; hence, such that at their departure, there is a necessity to perform specific rituals so as to fulfil the mandates of the society's culture. Some or times, these rites and rituals have unbearable implications on the innocence of the women as widows. Eventually, they are therefore, subjected to undergo certain stages of purification and prayers as dictated by the culture. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* captures this notion. In the text for instance, Okonkwo beats his wife, Ojiugo in 'Peace-weak' (78). Although against the tradition, yet Okonkwo shows the high-handedness of the men in the Igbo community.

In the Yoruba cosmology, there is similitude too in the notion held by the Igbo's.

H. A. Labeodan submits that:

Culture has silenced many Yoruba women. We have been made to believe that our bodies and minds are to be managed by the dictates of our culture. Mystery was built around certain practices: not fulfilling

these requirement[sic] is a taboo which leads to death or ostracism.

(70)

Labeodan advocacy is on the the ill treatment meted to the women of the Yorubas by the culture of the land. These ill treatment branches through several practices that end up being burdens on the women especially widows and may result to an eventual death of the women or their ejection from the soicity. E. Lasebikan in the light of this also opines that: “in Africa, the widow is oppressed, suppressed, afflicted, neglected, suspected, and insulted” (18). This spells it out that widows in Africa are made to undergo several ordeals as soon as their husbands die because they are the viable suspects to have murdered their husbands. Hence, according to Samuel O. Chukwu-Okoronkwo,

one of the horrendous nightmares that may confront a woman at the death of her husband in various African cultures is the oftentimes scandalous accusation from the deceased husband’s relations of having a hand in the man’s death irrespective of how peaceful they might have lived, especially when the woman had not been in good relationship with them. When this happens, such a widow is often times made to swear on a juju, lie on the same bed with the corpse of her late husband the night before interment, or even be subjected to

drink the water that is washed out of the husband's corpse as a proof of her innocence... (72)

From the foregoing, we can see the extent to which African widows are subjugated and dehumanised at the most vulnerable stage of their lives; a time where succour, receptivity and solace are needed more especially from close relatives and the people in the society.

In Adebowale's *Lonely Days*, several instances of discrimination of widows are portrayed at different levels ranging from accusations and allegations to subjection, and to denial of the power of choice. In Kufi town, where Yaremi hails from, married women are expected to bear children, tend them, and attend to their husbands needs in whatever dimensions their husbands needed. Although the widows who are discriminated in the novel are Dedewe, Fayoyin and Radeke, yet Yaremi as a widow also suffers discrimination even though she does not subject herself to the societal's dictate. In the opening page of the novel, Yaremi loses Adejumobi, her husband and then, her discrimination begins. We see how "she made efforts to console herself _ even as the distrustful eyes of 'sympathisers' glared from helms of garments, secretly castigating. Yaremi wondered..." (1). The people hold that whenever a man dies, the only cause of his death is his wife's sins and evil deeds. In the course of mourning her husband, she is not spared; she is discriminated all along. As the long trail of mourners gather to pretentiously sympathise with her,

She was scanned by mourners in all directions. All eyes followed every footstep she took with hostile closeness. And all ears listened, ready to catch her every word in a set-trap. These, obviously, were not people merely sitting in silent sympathy in the presence of death, but people who were fully bent on humiliating her and destroying her reputation.... Then followed, after a few days, the extended family's mockery heaped on her like the strange showers of a January rain...(3-4)

Hypocrisy is a major feature of the African society in setting like this. Dehumanising widows makes the culture firm and rigid as much as they perceive irrespective of the physical or psychological state of the widow whose house is a convergent square. One of the reasons why this seems inevitable is because the African society is a patriarchal structure, thus, favouring the men over the women. This judgment and treatment of widows by the society is one sided. Nobody cares if a woman dies as wife and there is need to prove her husband. Discrimination, hence, is first in the factor of 'gender' before personalities.

Another instance of widows' discrimination is seen through the character of Dedewe, a Kufi widow whom after losing her husband is accused of murder, subjugated, and forced to confess that she kills her husband otherwise she will suffer

"the punishment of heaven" (26), and will be ostracised and condemned forever. The narrator tells us how:

Dedewe,...used to cry all night brooding over the humiliation she had suffered at the hands of her husband's relatives... When her husband died, they had sat her down alone by the side of his corpse which lay on a wooden slab in the inner apartment of a dark room, and had asked her to confess her sins....

"Confess Dedewe."

"To the sin of jealousy and to the sin of adultery."

"The sin of defamation and disparagement."

Haven't you slandered this man several times in the presence of your friends?"

"Those big big lies you used to tell against him to spoil his good name!" (25)

From the above scenario, widows are laden with accusations too heavy to bear and too become too afraid to deny them. The excerpt above aligns with Okoronkwo's submission that "the widow, who may have enjoyed every amount of freedom and goodwill while her husband lived, suddenly turns incommunicado as the death of her

“husband heralds a period of imprisonment and hostility” for her (9). Her movement becomes restricted throughout the mourning period..”(72).

Fafoyin, the second widow,

was given libation to lick when her own husband died. They held it firmly to her lips, to purge her of all the sins they insisted she too had committed. Fafoyin was brought before the mourners who sat with dark brooding faces... The people, out of hatred for her, went beyond the dictates of their culture: they sprinkled cold water on her head, to soften the texture of her hair.... The barber propped Fafoyin's head between his thighs, clenched his teeth, and began scraping away with a sharp 'crocodile nacet' blade. (26)

Beyond the confines of culture, the patriarchal nature of the typical African society envelopes Kufi village so much that the death of a man means a lot. The reception of a man's death is laced with resentment and indignation towards his wife or wives. But the death of a woman is greeted with nothing but a wave of hand which could imply several things at a time.

Yet another instance of discrimination of widows in the novel is seen in the case of the third widow, Radeke who also finds herself in Kufi. Her husband dies but she is also subjected to a forceful and painful valedictory rites of mourning. She is made

to sing the widow's traditional song of innocence and lamentations, perform certain rituals to first, prove her innocence and then fulfil the discriminating longing of the supposed mourners. The winter narrates the scenario of the event:

Lie! The people were infuriated. Bloody liar, going to hell! They cursed the woman they thought was the killer of Radeke's husband, all through eyeing Radeke herself suspiciously:

"Darkness never ends for the trodent entrapped inside a calabash container."

"Forever the killer will be hungry and be perpetually in debt."

"She will owe the butcher at the abbatoir."

"She will be ridiculed in public places like a lunatic."

"Like a ram caught in the thicket, she will remain immobile." (28-29)

From the excerpt above, it is visible that the village does not only discriminate widows alone, but also any other woman that is suspect to have killed a man. They make pronouncements with the intention that the woman who kills Radeke's husband will be afflicted. Thus, their intention is fulfilled in that manner. Discrimination of the female gender is a haunting experience that leaves an audience with indignation and disgust for the masculine gender and a society largely who uses the culture or

tradition to afflict innocent women thereby making them feel devilish and wicked. A widow in the African cosmology is subjugated and dehumanised at the expense of the culture and sustaining masculinity.

In Darko's *Faceless*, even though the issue of widowhood is not evident textually, there is discrimination of the feminine gender of different ages at the different stages. The discrimination in the text comes to be as a result of the quest for identity especially the case of Maa Tsuru. She seeks to rediscover herself but she is discriminated by every individual who comes in contact with her. She becomes a solitary person and a prisoner in her own house because of the fear of coming out and having to face the society. On the arrival of Kabria, the writer narrates:

"Naa Yomo, we can't leave here without having tried to talk with Mma Tsuru", she declared....

"We are from an organization. Your daughter, Fofu is in our care. And we need to talk to you."

Maa Tsuru still didn't respond....

Naa Yomo shook her head slowly. "She comes out only when she must, usually at dawn, to sweep, or wash, or bath, or empty a chamber pot. When a man like that calls on you, you become an outcast in your own home..." (91)

The extent of discrimination Maa Tsuru faces totally affects her psychologically and eventually restructures her from an outgoing woman that cannot be alone without a man to a lonely woman by the piercing eyes and perforated tongues of the society which has redefined her. Even though Kabria, the female activist and therapist visits with the intention to help Maa Tsuru, yet she refuses to leave her bedroom because of the mental conception that she has been condemned. Naa Yomo also speaks of how women are discriminated by men when she says, "when a man like that calls on you, you become an outcast in your own home" (91). Furthermore, in the novel, until the MUTE steps in through the character of Kabria, the police and government officials ignore the plights of the girl children who are used as prostitutes by the pimps who gain off them. This technically means that the evil done against women by men does not bother the security arm and the government of the society because of the fact they see the female gender as important. This, too, is a major discrimination of the female gender.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have discussed the issues of single parenthood in Africa, and Widowhood and discrimination. We have examined how Adebowale and Darko portray single parenthood in African societies. In the former's depiction, single parenthood comes with challenges especially in a society where culture and tradition hold a lot of resentment for the person in view, and the positivity of single

parenthood, and that children who are brought up by single parents can become successful and useful to themselves, the family and society at large. However, in the case of the latter, the presentation of single parenthood is total failure because we see the single parents fail in their duties to their children which directly affects them. The children all end up in the street, exposed to all forms of abuse and dehumanisation in a bid to fend for themselves. The negligence of the parents leaves the children to face the outside world by themselves however horrible it may be. The issues of Widowhood and discrimination is also portrayed. In the former's case, we see the various ways widows are subjected to torture and inhumane treatments from the society in a bid to satisfy cultural dictates. In the latter, no widow is portrayed but we see the discrimination of the female gender of different ages generally and the impact of the dominance of the masculine gender.

CHAPTER THREE

PURSUIT OF SELF IDENTITY

Introduction

The nature and the operations at work in a society at a particular time have the tendency of affecting an individual's mannerism, way of life, thought patterns, moral dispositions, actions and inactions. This is because the result of the influence of the societal dictates and confines can make or mar an individual. In a case of being marred, an individual may lose his real identity and be forced to adopt another or he may choose to build a wall of defence around his original nature, against all odds. In the latter case, such individual will have to be tormented by the extremists and fanatics of such society's culture and tradition. This chapter of the essay will discuss the pursuit of self-identity by examining dominance, oppression and resistance, and self awareness and the quest for equality in both texts with some selected characters as case study.

3.1 Dominance, Oppression and Resistance

By nature, the African society is that which is embedded and entrenched in patriarchy as a result of the masculinity preference over the femininity. It is a total subversion of the relevance of the female gender across all sectors in the society. According to Hartman H.,

Patriarchy is a set of social relations which has a material base and in which there are hierarchical relations between men and solidarity among them which enable them in turn to dominate women. The material base of patriarchy is men's control over women labour power. That control is maintained by excluding women from access to necessary economically productive resources and by restricting women's sexuality. (97)

Hartman's interrogation of the system of patriarchy is that it operates as an overall subjugation of the feminine gender and the denial of that gender the right to certain things. In line with Hartman, Salaam T. submits that:

The patriarchal society sets the parameters for women's structurally unequal position in families and markets by condoning gender-differential terms in inheritance rights and legal adulthood, by tacitly condoning domestic and sexual violence and sanctioning differential wages for equal or comparable work. Tradition or culture and religion have dictated men and women relationship for centuries and entrenched male domination into the structure of social organization and institution at all levels of leadership. Patriarchy justifies the marginalization of women in education, economy, labour market, politics, business, family, domestic matters and inheritance. (116)

Salaam holds that patriarchy is placed in a position where the women in African society do share the same rights and boundaries with the men. This unhidden dominance extends to the point of financial exploitation of women and domestic violence which the law does not condemn. As sacred and ancient as African culture is, it has neither reviewed the harshness of patriarchy nor has it bothered to balance the place of both genders. Hence, the feminine gender is inferior to the masculine gender across all cadres of leadership in the African society. It therefore means that dominance and oppression pervade the system of patriarchy thereby demanding resistance from the feminine gender. According to bell hooks, “women and girls are silenced and seen as having no future in speaking while boys and men are encouraged to become preachers and that women and girls could be threatened with the label of madness for speaking too much or even for daring to ask for speech. (6-7)

Dominance is suggestive of total subjugation of the female gender where the men take charge of everything that makes up the essentials of the society. They rule over all sectors: the educational sector, the economic sector, the labour market, the political sectors, the business world, the family units, domestic matters and inheritance of significant value, leaving nothing for the women. This situation makes the weakness of the feminine gender obvious.

An instance of dominance in Bayo Adebowale’s *Lonely Days* is portrayed after Ajumobi’s death. Through the use of the narrative technique, flashback, Yaremi

recalls the earthly moments she has with her husband, Ajumobi and his manliness.

She laments:

Let Ajumobi come back again and give pieces of advice, as usual, on two hundred issues! ...his orders screamed out in his characteristics manly way: Get me cold water for a quick bath, Yaremi. Let my food be ready immediately. Make sure you add plenty of pepper to the soup. This time I need extra pepper to lash my coated tongue, and to wash down the sore in my throat. Get ready my *aha*. Spread me a mat, Yaremi, to rest my aching ribs on. (69-70)

In the excerpt above, we see Yaremi reliving the memories of herself and her husband while he is alive. But emphatically, she is enveloped in his display of manliness by giving orders with whatever tone he pleases especially with harshness. This is because the African society decorates the man with giving of orders while the woman is designed to take orders irrespective of the inconveniencing nature of the orders. The woman is designed to attend to all her man's needs and however way he wants. This, therefore, is a depiction of dominance.

Another instance of dominance in the text is depicted towards the end of the novel where Yaremi is to fulfil the cultural mandate of taking a new husband after the death of her first husband. In Kufi village, a widow is mandated to pick a new cap and continue her normal life because it is not lawful for a widow (and the

feminine gender generally) to live without a man. It will only imply that she is proud and tries to measure up with a man, which will automatically mean equality with the male gender. Hence, we see dominance in that process as the elders argue that purification later, for Yaremichoosing a new cap to replace the old one is now! Now! (108). The previous widows before Yaremi in their solidarity visit her a day before the cap picking occasion and advise her on the necessity of picking a new cap to fulfil all cultural laws. They tell her:

No woman's life is ever complete without a man to prop her on in the arduous journey of this world, it is the law of nature. A bird does not fly with one arm of its wings. Let all of us, women of this land, learn to be humble, meek and submissive, and be ready, at all times to accommodate our men. When our husbands die,.... we quickly re-adjusted and embraced the demands of tradition. We picked new caps, following the dictates of tradition. We are re-married. (111-112)

Patriarchy is so rooted and powerful such that its strands already conform the mindset of some women as seen in the case of the three widows: Fafoyin, Dedewe and Radeke who hold more respect for the tradition the at the expense of their happiness. They see their predicament as just a momentary feeling or vacuum that needs to be filled if they must hold their high. The narrator also tells us how Yaremi and Ajumobi do debate on the humility and submissiveness of womanhood, and the

arrogance and, self-conceit of manhood (107). Ajumobi's words from the extract are a proof of the directions a woman's life takes in an African society. It is man's arrogance and self conceit versus the woman's humility and submissiveness.

In Koumagnon A. Djossou's words, Amma Darko's narratives, patriarchy is worth criticism since it hinders women from enjoying life the way they desire and automatically privileges men over women so that women have little or no claims to material, sexual and intellectual resources in society. That is, in a patriarchal society women have to struggle to be educated, to have property or to make choices regarding marriage and other aspects of life. For men, these resources are a matter of right and can make choices that affect their lives. (40)

Oppression as another feature of patriarchy is also depicted in both texts. The masculine gender dominates the society by oppressing the feminine gender. This oppression comes in different forms that some or all times deprive the women folk of some rights and privileges to make choices on their own and to live a life they choose to live. The patriarchal structure of the typical African society coronates the masculine gender over the feminine gender by granting them (the male folk) dominance over the female folk. This dominance is achieved in most cases by oppression. To this effect, Makama G. Allanana postulates that:

This position of women in society in relation to men and the subordination, oppression and marginalization of women has attracted

the attention of scholars, activists, feminists and development workers for a very long time. The issues relating to what is also known as gender inequality has become very prominent in the last few decades. (116-17)

An instance of oppression in Adebowale's *Lonely Days* is traceable to the widows comments in their moments of sober where they gather on the widows path to share their horrible experiences. The demise of their husbands sets them at mercy of the every passing eyes and moving mouth in the society. They are perpetually subjected to a life of solitude and desolation until the society passes her verdict of freedom from the accusation of husband-murder to the induction of a new life. As the widows gather, one of them laments: One can't really dance well wearing this kind of garment,.... This garment which sticks stubbornly to the body, like the ragged robes of a disgraced masquerade. (24). The tightness of the garment on the widows is symbolic of cultural bondage and denial of freedom of choice. They are held bound in their piteous state.

Oppression also reoccurs in the novel to Yaremi, the protagonist after she refuses to 'pick a new cap'. She publicly turns down the offer of choosing a new husband to continue from where Ajumobi stopped, which other ladies in time past have embraced. The consequence of her action is raw oppression meted to her by the elders of Kufi. The narrator tells us that:

Yaremi had contravened traditional widowhood injunctions and was to be punished accordingly. The villagers had been instructed to ostracise her and avoid her like a leper. Her husband's property was to be immediately confiscated. She was to begin packing her things now, in preparation for the exile, which they had resolved to impose on her!

(140)

Breaking the tradition is the height of audacity and disregard for it by anyone. Here is Yaremi who does not only break the traditional widowhood injunctions, but also does so in public before the young and old. The same she fails to obey also fails to back her up at her time of need. She is desolated, ostracised and deprived of all her right because of her action. This eventually portrays the unfair treatment widows and women generally are subjected to in a masculine dominated society in Africa.

In Darko's Faceless, oppression of the female gender is also depicted. The female characters of different ages are oppressed too by male characters of different ages. For instance, Fofa is beaten up by Poison's gang in a bid to prevent her from blowing their cover of killing a teenager, Baby who eventually is Fofa's sister unknowing to them. Fofa narrates:

But it turned out to be a big mistake on my part. I should rather have gone somewhere else altogether because being with my gang, Poison's gang located me easily. They came to our shack. Odarley and

the others were so afraid that they didn't even dare to shout for help. Poison is feared greatly. He is very elusive. But he has very many people working for him. They beat me up and sent me to him. He gave me a vicious slap and warned me to never utter a word to anyone that I knew the dead girl, let alone that she was my sister.... He killed her and doesn't want her death to be traced to him." (104)

Another instance of oppression in the text is seen when Kwei, Maa Tsuru's first husband metes out violence on his pregnant wife because of his level of irresponsibility as a husband. His animosity toward his wife presents the men in the society Darko describes as good-for-nothing other than drinking and sexing with the women at any time. The narrator tells us:

Kwei returned to the house reeking like pure vodka on two legs. He entered the room with a bland face. No smile. No frown. Maa Tsuru had just opened her lips to ask what was amiss when she felt Kwei upon her. He pounced on her like a cat on an unsuspecting mouse and began a vicious pounding spree. He pounded Maa Tsuru with his fists, landing the blows anywhere and everywhere and on every part of her pregnant. The daylight went out of Maa Tsuru. She began to bleed. Kwei grinned. He pushed her up by one arm, held her by the back of her neck and pushed her out of the house. (124)

From the foregoing, we see the result of Maa Tsurus failure to abort the child. Men resolve to the application of violence as a proof of manliness. Oppressing the women and female gender generally seems to validate their masculine relevance. Wife-beating only proves that most of these men are wolves in sheep clothing. They creep in as though with good intentions but end as abusers and oppressors. Allegorically, Kwei stands for some male characters irresponsibility to take part in the welfare of the family and by extension in the community's well-being.

Poison, the street lord and notorious pimp from the take off of his character in the novel is supposed to grow into a good man but his stepfather alters the possibility by being brutal towards the boy child. This brutality and high-handedness he suffers from the older man directly affects him psychologically, leaving him to become an abuser. He is less concerned about other children's real mental state. He gets what he wants from anyone he wants, alongside his boys. We are told that:

“Poison ran away from home at the age of eight to hit the streets...he was an extremely shy boy, very soft spoken and covered from head to toe in scars gained from several years of lashes with a man's leather belt at the stepfather's hand” (169).

The brutality Poison suffers as evident in the extract above is obviously too much for a lad of eight to bear. The street life hence becomes a place of solace for Poison in order to escape the oppressive tendencies of his stepfather. Sadly, he, Poison does

not act in opposite direction. He picks up from where his stepfather stopped, but this time, to the female gender which indirectly displays the dominance of the male gender.

In response to the masculine dominance and oppression of the female folks in Kufi village, Yaremi builds resistance, which is a tenacious act; the ability to resist and reject certain authority and mandates. Iniobong Uko, a scholar and female critic makes her submission on the stereotypes that defines the African woman by saying:

Unlike the European-American concept of gender, which depicts the woman as vocal, assertive and liberated, the contemporary concept of gender in Africa is represented by the female stereotypes of docility, reticence and passiveness. Man is ahead of woman, assumed to be higher than her, and also superior to her. (3)

The excerpt above simply infers that the woman figure in the European-American world exhibits her notion and view of an ideal woman; however, a woman is still bound by the conventional patriarchal module. Resistance hence, becomes the tool deployed by the African woman to survive and most times live above the dictates of tradition.

In the novel, resistance is preeminently depicted through the character of Yaremi, the protagonist. On several occasions, she proves to not just be a woman or

one of the women of Kufi who submit to all the cultural laws and men's wants by exhibiting rejection in some cases. For instance,

She had once pulled down Ajumobi's *buba* from the wooden rack during a squabble. That was the time Ajumobi had hotly provoked her, passing unsavoury remarks on her cooking, on her appearance and her personal habits. "Let's see who is stronger! You or me? You can't do anything with me, Ajumobi! Today I'll show you I have power too. My tongue is my power. You useless husband! Good for nothing. I'll whip you crazy with my tongue - this tongue. Tongue of a woman. Do you know it? *Tra- tra- tra-* our tongues are hot like fire in a furnace; restive like a tornado and sharp like ground pepper. I'll whip you silly,... And render your muscles impotent." (64-5)

In the excerpt above, Yaremi refuses to be insulted by her husband who to her has crossed his boundaries. It is already enough that a woman is perpetually subjected to the kitchen and pleasing her husband; taking insults in her place of administering her duties becomes intolerable. She indirectly instructs other women from her words to know that a woman has her weapon of resistance which is her tongue, and must be well used.

The refusal to pick a new cap' by Yaremi is also another act of resistance. It is first an insult to the entire masculine clan, then a degradation of the potency of the

tradition of the land. While other widows fall victim of lack of choice to choose their path and happiness, she, Yaremi, refuses to settle with the people's opinion. Her response to her fellow widow who come to advise her on the need to pick a new cap projects a woman whose mind is made up not to be held bound by cultural confinement. She declares:

"... Lanwa, you must stop preaching the sermon of our people's old custom and tradition. This your long story of Kinsman and cousin and half-brother connection with my late husband cannot catch me like a deer in a snare! I reserve the right to choose the type of life I want to lead. It could be that of a woman deliberately aloof in self-contentment, untouched by the victimisation and oppression of the man; or that of a woman sulking the anger of an injury, protesting humiliations heaped on her, over the years by the man. I may choose to shield off man, permanently in my life, and transfer all affection and devotion to my children, spoiling them every minute with motherly love and care." (103)

At the scene of the cap picking, Yaremi displays her total disregard for the culture by choosing her loneliness over another season of masculine dominance. She disregards her fellow widows → advice because she perceives them weak and non-resilient. The narrator tells us:

Yaremi turned round and bowed to the elders who sat speechless and overwhelmed. She grimaced at the three widows with a hesitating countenance and began picking her way back to the house, leaving everybody under the *odan* tree gazing in petrified stupidity... (116)

From the excerpt above, we see the doggedness of Yaremi before the entire community; the gathering of men and elders, and other villagers. One may see this as a display of arrogance but it is arguable that her resolution is tied around her decision that she, Yaremi will never stop loving Ajumobi. (121). And most importantly, she was sure she would triumph in the end over the forces of evil. (118).

3.2 Self Awareness and the Quest for Equality

Over the years, women have begun to know their place and stand their ground in the contemporary world at large irrespective of the doggedness of patriarchy and its strands. The women folk have decided to rise and give attention to the long-ignored subject of oppression and dominance by the male counterpart. Some African writers like Adebowale and Darko have taken it upon themselves to liberate the feminine folk from the shackles of masculine dominance and cultural imprisonment. This liberation can come in different forms which do not agree with the statements of culture. It could be by self awareness; it could also be by a quest for equality.

Self awareness is the realisation of oneself after a period of vagueness or misleading. It can be seen also a medium of breaking out from a long-held opinion or laws which may have resulted in psychological imprisonment or physical manifestations such as denial or violence. Usually, when one becomes aware of himself, he breaks free from every form of limitation and negativity. In the case of patriarchy versus female folk, self awareness mostly results in a quest for equality. Simply put, the female folk's orientation changes from the dominated to a 'match'.

In *Lonlely Days*, Yaremi, Ajumobi's widow faces lots of dehumanisation and discriminations based on cultural strength. Over time, she refuses to pick a new cap as mandated by the culture. Her refusal is tied to the consciousness of her being enough for herself as a result of the qualities she possesses. Adebowale's portrayal of Yaremi is that of a woman who is neither less of herself nor inferior to a man. For instance, after Ajumobi's death, several men try to woo Yaremi but she turns all of them down because of her unflinching decision not to be an object of 'less' for any other Kufi man. The narrator tell us that:

Most of the village men in Kufi resented Yaremi for her 'self-conceit' and loathed her for what always came out of her mouth, by the way of resistance of them. Times without number, Yaremi had told the men what they hated to hear - the plain truth - that she was neither a napkin nor a rag to clean up mess with. She was not a music calabash for clumsy fingers of drummers. The strands of her hair were not for the

grubby claws of ruffians. No. She was a neat woman, vibrant as the lily, floating on the clear water of the village lake; a pretty woman carrying the blackness of her skin like a shining royal gown over her smooth body. (90)

From the excerpt above, we see the daring nature of Yaremi. She carries her awareness as a real African woman laced with strength and class, rather than a plaything to the other gender. She makes it known to them that she is not one meant to be treated anyhow. Her audacity offends the men of Kufi who expect her to be docile and submissive. But here is a woman who needs to make a statement that women too matter and are superior as against the backdrop of cultural imprisonment. Again, another instance that proves Yaremi's intentionality of self-awareness is seen in her response to the drummer who desires to take her as his wife. She blatantly turns him down saying: "Not me. I am a human being! You can't intoxicate me with the harsh melody of your talking drum. Those women of the village whom you say are crowding round you, forsaking their husbands, should be ashamed of themselves. They are a disgrace to Kufi." (100). This statement above reveals that Yaremi is not ignorant of the ploy of Kufi men who lure women with all sweet words just to have her but objectify them as time goes on. She completely opposes that notion and gives an impression that she is not cheap. In order not to end like other Kufi women, Yaremi stands her ground by resisting advances of men towards her.

The quest for equality is also another technique deployed by women in Africa to rebel against the dominance of men. Modern feminists tend to advocate more for equality of both gender. The advancement of the world has led to the emergence of self consciousness by the female gender such that there are numerous submissions and comments about equality. Adebowale's protagonist is a depiction of such statement. Yaremi on several occasions reiterate her manly attributes clothed in woman figure. Though beautiful, graceful and fragile by gender, yet not weak by description and disposition. For instance, over time, Yaremi begins to feel exactly like a man. The death of Ajumobi makes her adjust psychologically to become a bread-winner. She naturally begins to play the role of a husband and a wife. The masculinity of the duty she performs such as spending time to advise Woye as he grows, going to the farm and fetching log of woods, watching over her husband's court and having a response to everyone that comes to her with a gossip or derogation bestows upon her a masculine nature too, so much that the authors says:

YAREMI wondered if she was not gradually becoming a man! Strange as that was! Her gait had become restive. Her voice now was authoritative and sharp. Each time she had had somebody to shout at, she'd shouted with the big voice of a man craving for recognition in the crowd. There was something really precise, something practised now, in the way Yaremi moved her body: hua-hua-hua, like a man on

a secret mission... She was tending more and more towards masculinity.(98)

The firmness of the quest for equality by Yaremi is not only felt by the men of Kufi; the women too attest to it. Yaremi no longer acts like other women as noticed in her rash replies to anyone who cares to listen to her stand about her femininity. She walks like a man and thinks like a man. This signature makes her stand out amongst other women in the society. Her intention also sends signals of liberation from the confines of patriarchy and the quest for equality to several other women.

"Yee! What a grip! You are no longer a woman, Yaremi! You hurt me badly with your rough, octopus grip-crushing my fingers. Your wine tapper's rough-hand grip hurts badly. You squeeze my small fingers so savagely. Can you not hear me groan? I think you have become a man. You are a man, Yaremi!".

Yaremi just smiled, her eyes shining bright-betraying no sentiment and no emotion. It was good for her now to begin to play the man. What she had to contend with and endure were all beyond the woman-the heat, the worries, the pressures of life, the distress and the agony of loneliness.(99).

Yaremi as used by Adebowale is the representation for all other women across the world who have been and are still subjected to cultural imprisonment as a result of gender.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, *Lonely Days* and *Faceless* have been used by both authors to describe the effect of patriarchal dominance in the African society. It has been revealed to be a system used as an instrument of oppression, subjection and subjugation of the female folk who painted as weaker vessels and second class across all sectors as depicted in the novels. One of the significances of this essay is that it has brought to reality the ordeals of the female gender even in the contemporary world of today. Tanure Ojaide et al. in *Culture, Society, and Politics in Modern African Literature: Texts and Contexts* submit that Starting from the premise that literature is a cultural production of a people, we have come to the understanding that a meaningful discussion on African literature needs knowledge of what factors influencing modern African writers have given rise to their artistic productions (11). From the data collected from both texts, we can see that Bayo Adebowale and Amma Darko demonstrate the high-handedness, violent nature and oppressive power used by male characters raised with patriarchal values and the nature of the society entrenched in patriarchy. They also project the doggedness of some female character through the ordeals and the refusal to subject themselves to the total crippling of

their woman ego and pride. Resistance hence, becomes their necessary tool to rebel against the oppression meted out to them. Besides, culture is indirectly portrayed as the major of these inhumane treatments.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

In this essay, we have examined the quest for identity of African women in Bayo Adebowale's *Lonely Days* and Amma Darko's *Faceless*. Chapter one is the general introduction of the study. In the same chapter, we established that the feminist theory is the appropriate theory to use in attempting works that look at the social perception of gender subjects related to women in literary texts. In this regard, the purpose of literature is beyond art for art's sake.

In chapter two, we examined the subject of identity and African culture in both stet. We further examined two major subsections. At first, we looked at Single Parenthood in African Tradition where we discussed the meaning of single parenthood, the place of Single Parenthood in Africa, and the effects that single parenting in this regard can pose on the offsprings. In Adebowale's *Lonely Days*, we examined the character of Yaremi, whose life is laced with the repudiate effect of gender oppression and subjugation as a result of her current and sudden state of widowhood. The chapter showed the different stages and kinds of ill-treatments that are meted out to women, especially widows. They are first, alleged for the murder of their husbands, afterwards, they perform purification rites. Amidst all of these, Yaremi patiently and committedly grooms her grandson, Woye into a responsible

yard. She manages her psychologically impaired state and the excesses of the boy with motherly love. Even when he is sick, she bothers over it like his mother would.

Again, in the same chapter, we looked at some characters in Darko's *Faceless* who were starved of proper upbringing and parental care. For instance, we have the character of Maa Tsuru who values her lover over her children. Her first husband deserts her because he cannot keep up with the increasing responsibility; hence, she is left to single handedly raise the children. When she can no longer cope, the children are forced to take the life of streetism, fending for themselves through thick and thin. While Adebayo presents to us that single parenthood in Africa can be successful no matter the state one finds oneself, Darko presents to us the ups and downs of single parenting and how it is most times a shipwreck.

In chapter three, our focus was on issue of patriarchy in Africa and its impacts on the feminine gender in both novels. We examined the subject of dominance, oppression, resistance, and self awareness and the quest for equality. Dominance and oppression in *Lonely Days* are portrayed to be some of the tools used by the masculine gender to overpower and subject the feminine gender. So in Kufi village for instance, the husbands are seen as the ←owners→ of their wives. The men are dominant figures in every aspect of the village including law making. In *Faceless*, we also see the major male characters like Kwei, Kpakpo, Onko and Poison dominate the females. Kwei, even as a jobless man rules Maa Tsuru the way it

pleases him. Kpakpo, Onko and Poison take advantage of Baby T respectively. But in the midst of this, some women still find and defend themselves against masculine ploys to render them (women) useless. In conclusion, both authors have shown the effects of a patriarchal system on the women and the liberation technique that can be deployed to bring about fairness in treatment, even though not total equality.

Works Cited

Abrams, M. H. and Harpham, Geoffrey. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 10th edition, Wadsworth Cengage. 2012.

Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. London: Heinemann. 1958. Print

Adebowale, Bayo. *Lonely Days*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited. 2006. Print

Annin, Felicia..A Critical Overview of Amma Darko's *Faceless*- a Review. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 16(5), p81-84, 2013.

B. Moore and K. Bruder. *Philosophy: The Power of Ideas*, (ed.). California: Mayfield Publishing Company, p356, 1998. Print

Chukwu-Okoronkwo, O. Samuel. "The culture of widowhood practices in Africa: De-institutionalizing the plights of women through theatre". *American Journal of Social Science Research*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 71-76, 2015. Print

Darko, A. *Faceless*. Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers. 2013. Print

Djossou, K. Alfred. "The Monster in Patriarchy: A review in Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon, The Housemaid and Faceless*", *American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research (AJHSSR)*, Volume-02, Issue-11, pp-35-43, 2018. Print

ENG 415, *Literary Theory and Criticism*, National Open University of Nigeria, 2009.

Freud, Sigmund. "Beyond the Pleasure Principles. In J. E. Strachey. (Ed. and Trans.), *The Standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*" (vol. 18. pp. 7-66). London: Hogarth Press. 1920.

Ike, C. B and Akujobi, O. S. "Widowhood in Lonely Days: Unsung Casualties". AJELLS: Awka Journal of English Language and Literary Studies, Vol. 8 No. 1, 2021

Labeodan, H. A. "Beyond Critique: A Philosophical Appraisal of some Cultural Practices Infringing on the Rights of Women in Yorubaland", in Docas Akintunde & Helen Labeodan (eds.) *Women and the Culture of Violence in Traditional Africa*. Ibadan: Sefer Books Ltd: 68 - 78. 2002.

Mill, J. Stuart. "The Subjection of Women" in *Philosophy: A very short Introduction*, ed., E. Craig, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.110. 2002. Print

Nnolim, E. C. (2009). *Issues in African Literature*. Nigeria: Malijoe Soft. Print

Ouarodima, Maina. "Violence Against Women: A Reading of Amma Darko's *Faceless*". *International Journal of English, Literature and Social Sciences (IJELS)*, Vol-4, pp 1699-1705. 2019. Print

Rousseau, J. Jacques. "In Emile: Seminal work on Education" culled from *Philosophy of Education*, ed., R. A. Atkinson, London: Penguin, p67, 1986. Print

S. A. Watkins, et. al. *Introducing Feminism*. Cambridge: Icon Book Ltd, p3, 1999.

Print

Ukagba, U. George. *The Kpim of Feminism: Issues and Women in a Changing World*.

"Feminism in Historical and Cultural Perspective." Canada: Trafford, p30, 2010.

Print

Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. London: Guardian

Newspaper, p16. 2008. Print