

**THE DENIGRATION OF THE MALE IMAGE IN MARJORIE OLUDHE
MACGOYE'S SELECTED NOVELS**

BY

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DEDICATION

To all those men who have shaped my life. This is for you.

ABSTRACT

This study investigates Marjorie Oludhe's portrayal of male image in *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment*. Of primary influence to the study is that little attention has been given to the analysis of women's writings in relation to the representation of male image even as the male characters are used as a foil to articulate the experiences of women which has risked perpetuating the derogatory views of women as victims and men as agents of social ills. The literary devices have also been manipulated to subvert the falsification of female image, raising the question of how the same has been exploited to represent the male image. Finally, the feminist literary writers have, in earnest, reasserted the female identity in manners that transform the stereotypes into liberating modes of selfhood and agency. However, the male characters have not been given the alternative paths. This research; therefore, is concerned with the impact that this has on the male characters. It is because of the above gaps that this research looked into the works of Marjorie Oludhe and analyzed the denigrated male image. The study is hinged on the premise that there are few critical studies on men. A study of male image in Marjorie Oludhe's selected novels; therefore, enriches the available criticism on the author's art. This research is limited to the following specific objectives that are to: explore the denigrating male image brought out in Marjorie Oludhe's selected novels, examine the literary devices that Marjorie Oludhe use to depict the adverse male image in her selected novels and, analyze the social impacts of the denigration of male image on the characters in selected novels. Queer theory that is a response to perceived limitations in the liberationist and identity conscious politics guided this study. The study utilized analytical research design. A universe of feminist literary writings was targeted and a sampling unit extracted purposively. Marjorie Oludhe's *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment* formed the primary sources of data that were used for this study. Data was obtained from a close reading of primary novels supplemented by secondary texts. From the findings, the ideas that are articulated with regard to masculinity are informed by and juxtaposed to those around femininity. Additionally, the study shows that Marjorie Oludhe deconstructs the male image; however, they are placed in a state of inactivity. The literary devices used are also permeated with an internalized ideology that imposes a unified meaning in the selected novels: the male characters are wicked. Finally, the concomitant impact of the shifts on the balance of power relations between the male characters and the female characters is overwhelmingly detrimental to the male characters. This study concludes that both men and women have a lot to learn from being seen through the lens of the other. This research; thus, recommends that the notion of masculinity needs revision in order to accommodate the multiple fissures that occur between them.

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

It is imperative to define the following terms to show how they have been used in this thesis. **Image and Identity:** According to the *Oxford Dictionary*, an image refers to the impression that a person, an organisation gives to the public. It is a mental picture that one has of what someone is like or looks like. While an identity refers to those characteristics, feelings or beliefs that distinguish people from others: a sense of cultural identity/group identity etc. This research utilises the two terms interchangeably.

Patriarchy: According to Mary Daly in her book *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*, patriarchy is a way of thought. It is a kind of gang rape of (women's) minds as well as of bodies by the various cultural institutions that impose a male value system upon women (73). Using this definition, the works studied in this thesis explore how the male characters manipulate social traditions that have been set by patriarchy, a social institution characterised by a power structure that does not allow for equality in gender relations as they relate to marriage for instance.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Good literature reflects the life and spirit of a people. Writers hold a mirror up to their society. A society finds expression through its authors, and in this way, it is the co-author of literary works...In its literature and art, a society reveals its “soul” (Molière 1997).

The concept of what it means to be a “man” or a “woman” and the gender that is built on the sexed body, both historically and contemporaneously, is the object of an extensive critique by African feminists in an environment characterised by patriarchy and widespread male chauvinism. This critique is fed into discussions and debates about masculinities and femininities in useful ways that contribute to the advancement of knowledge. This is not, of course, to suggest that the feminist critique is not without its weaknesses. According to CODESRIA in *Masculinities in Contemporary Africa*, masculinities are founded on certain assumptions about the roles and the responsibilities of a male member of a household or community. However, the validity of the assumptions is repeatedly questioned by changes in context and circumstances, which, in the most dramatic cases, result in the reversal of roles between men and women within the household and the larger society brought about by structural shifts in the economy, a re-ordering of social relations, or interpretations of “customs” and “traditions” (13). In other words, the foundations on which masculinities are built are regularly shifted over time and in different stages, although the overarching ideology of male power does not always reflect these shifts. This consequently means that these discussions do not reflect the existence and the will of people as men are categorised as a

group with common negative characteristics. The discussions and debates fail to take into account the intergenerational differences that continue to exist in the fullness of time.

The mirror that the literary writers hold up to their society should transcend gender prejudices to create an egalitarian society since they are quite instrumental in changing, shaping and influencing judgements of those who frequently read them. Literature is presumed to have a lot of influence on the readers in ways that unconsciously demand that they conform to a variety of expectations. Yet, most literatures, particularly written by feminists, fail to reflect the changing content and context of masculinities as well as the intergenerational differences in the contemporary expressions of masculinities in Africa. In a bid to correct these erroneous negative portrayal of masculinities and, in so doing, open new frontiers of reflection on gender issues in Africa, this research focuses on the denigration of the male images in Marjorie Oludhe's *Coming to Birth* and the *Present Moment*.

1.2 Background to the study

The feminist literary criticism is the direct product of the “women’s movement” of the 1960s. This movement was literary from the start, in the sense that it realised the significance of the image of women promulgated by literature, and saw it vital to combat it and question its authority and coherence. Feminism; therefore, helped women to rethink themselves. From this perspective, feminism not only helped to question traditional concepts of femininity but also the sexual division per se. By demanding political and social changes, women were questioning patriarchal precepts, and this would finally lead to the development of a critique of the hegemonic rules of gender. The representation of women in literature, then, was felt to be one of the important forms of socialisation, since it provided the role models which indicated to women and men, what constituted acceptable versions of the ‘feminine’ and legitimate feminine goals and aspirations. In agreement, Carter, Cythia and Steiner, Linda in their article “Introduction to Critical Readings: Media and Gender” say, “The concern of

feminism was that the sexist messages of these literatures socialised people, especially children, into thinking that dichotomised and hierarchical sex-role stereotypes were “natural” and “normal” (2). Therefore, in order for feminists to challenge these standards of representation, empirical evidence was required.

Kate Millet’s trailblazing *Sexual Politics* of 1970s saw clearly that the widespread negative stereotyping of women in literature constituted a formidable obstacle on the road to true equity. She further justified her argument that “The image of women as we know it is an image created by men and fashioned to suit their needs” (46). Feminist critics; therefore, showed how often literary presentations of women repeated familiar cultural stereotypes. Much of the research involved, according to Bertens, Hans in *Literary Theory: The Basics*, naturally focused on the work of male authors, but female writers, too, came under scrutiny and were regularly found to have succumbed to the lure of stereotypical representations. Since the way female characters were standardly portrayed had not much in common with the way feminist critics saw and experienced themselves, these characters were constructions, put together to serve a not- so-hidden purpose: the continued social and cultural domination of males (97-99). This, consequently, saw the burgeoning of systematic research into the literature image of women.

Thus, in feminist criticism of 1970s the major effect went into exposing what might be called the mechanisms of patriarchy, that is, the cultural mind-set in men and women which perpetuated inequality. Critical attention was given to books by male writers in which influential or typical image of women was constructed. The criticism which undertook this work was combative and polemical. Then, in the 1980s, in feminism as in other critical approaches the mood changed. Firstly, feminist criticism became more eclectic, meaning that it began to draw upon the findings and approaches of other kinds of criticism. Secondly, it switched its focus from attacking male versions of the world to exploring the nature of the

female world and outlook, and reconstructing the lost or supposed records of female experience. Thirdly, attention was switched to the need to construct a new canon of women's writing by rewriting the history of the novel and of poetry in such a way that neglected women writers were given prominence.

1.2.1 Subverting Male Writers' Representation of Female Image

Contemporary female writers have made significant strides in attempting to redefine the role of women in African literature. In her insightful article "La Fonction Politique des Littératures Africaines Ecrites," Mariama Ba describes what she believes to be the function of an African woman writer:

The woman writer has a special mission. She, more than her male counterparts, has to present the condition of the African woman in all its aspects. Injustices persist; segregations continue...discriminations abound in the family, in institutions, in streets, work places, political assemblies. We must, as women, take charge of our own destiny in order to overthrow the status quo which harms us and we must no longer submit to it. Like men, we must use the non-violent but effective weapon that is literature. We no longer accept the nostalgic praises to the African mother who, in his anxiety, man confuses with mother Africa (34).

Mariama Ba believes that it is the incumbent upon women, in the words of the feminist critic Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie in her essay titled "The Female Writer and her Commitment", "to tell about being a woman and describe reality from a woman's point of view, a woman's perspective" (5). In other words, women writers were committed to re-imagining what Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie calls "the reality of the African woman," which she argues is either distorted in, or deleted from, African literature by male writers (8). They attempted to fill the gender gaps between male and female characterisations.

By taking up the pen, the women writers began defining themselves in their own terms. They empowered female protagonists, moving them from the periphery to the centre. This enabled the women characters portrayed in their fiction to express their own experiences and deal with a variety of issues affecting them. Feminists' novelists articulated women's position in Africa's social milieu by reconstructing the stereotypical perception of women's objects of procreation and being socially inferior to their male counterparts. They interrogated and reassessed identity crisis foisted upon women, especially the stereotypical portrayal of women as weak and vulnerable in male authored literary works as evident in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, *Arrow of God* and Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine*. They vehemently criticised the ostensible crafting of the female characters as weaklings and sex objects. Alternatively, strong female characters have been created in the feminists' novels. In *The Present Moment*, for instance, Marjorie Oludhe portrayed a strong-willed character, Wairimu, who prefers to live with her man as a mistress rather than a wife. Marjorie Oludhe's novels rewrite earlier male novels by creating female characters that defy cultural barriers, and heroically make progress in the face of enormous odds placed in their paths by stifling male-dominated social structure. She writes her selected novels via female protagonists and locates fiction in domestic space where the protagonists define themselves, mostly, by their role as women.

In comparison, scholarly interest in the representation of men in literature and the construction of masculinity has not been as significant. According to Beynon, James in *Masculinities and Culture*, the study of gender representation in literature has tended to focus on women, to the extent that the portrayal of male image has not even been regarded as problematic (15). Most studies of African women's novels, particularly those examined in this study, have focused on female characters and feminist's concerns. However, though these characters are central to the narrative and to the feminist ideology of most feminist

authors, they do not operate in isolation; their experiences develop within their social relationships with men that have attracted the interest of this research. This research; therefore, delves into the work of feminist literary writers through the lens of Marjorie Oludhe's *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment* to examine how the male image is represented as the male characters are used as a foil to articulate the experiences of women. It will be possible to process the male image since a wide range of male characters are viewed through the eyes of the female protagonists.

More importantly, using the point conveyed by Mary Wollstonecraft's title "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman", this research stresses that feminism originates in Western Enlightenment Liberalism, that is, in a new conception of human nature as universal, and in a conjoined movement for human rights in particular cases based on that universal (4). Against this background, this study interprets feminism as a bid to extend membership in universal human nature, and hence eligibility for human rights, to that category of beings named women. Therefore, feminist theory has failed to address the false universalism, misogyny and gender asymmetry of mainstream literary criticism. Consequently, Benstock, Shari in *Feminist Issues in Literary Scholarship* argues that the feminist theory's obsessive complaints over, alternately, the dearth or surplus concepts in literary work seemed to reanimate the disabling essentialism that practical feminism had hoped to escape (32). This universalism is not only extended to women characters in fiction but also to male characters that are viewed in stark opposition to female characters. The fixed frame of reference; therefore, becomes the core interest for this research in the discussion of the representation of male image in *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment*.

The concern for this research is reinforced further by Connell Raewyn in her book titled *Masculinities* who questions the prospects for change in men and women's lives. He echoes that research on gender is worth doing since gender is not a fixed pattern. There is

neither traditional masculinity nor traditional femininity from which we are now moving toward. The cause of disagreement should therefore be on the directions that the gender changes take and whether they produce a more democratic, a more equal society, more humane and reasonable relationships between men and women. Connell Raewyn argues that attempts by individual men and women to reconstruct themselves do little to shift things, and that what is required is change in the institutional and collective character of gender relations (23). Deconstruction of gender ought to bring about a state that is more democratic, more egalitarian, more civilized and level-headed relationships between men and women. By using the male characters to articulate the experiences of women characters in fiction, we go missing the point. The male characters are placed on the negative to bring forth the plight of women characters which paradoxically point out to the inescapability of the male gender. As Marjorie Oludhe engages with the deconstruction of gender to distort the stereotypical portraiture of female characters in *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment*, this research is; thus, concerned with Marjorie Oludhe's perspective in so far as the future vision for men is concerned which is demonstrated in the male characters' new image.

Similarly, Farrel, Warren in his article "Does Feminism Discriminate against Men: A Debate (*Point and Counterpoint*), argues that masculinity is a subject of a debate whether the concept follows historically still applies. He states that researchers such as Care International argue that there is a harmful downside due to considerations such as the following:

- The relationship between masculinity and gender based violence
 - The disempowerment and impoverishment of women and the persistence of gender inequalities through men's violence.
 - The loss of men's dignity and self-esteem when they are taught to behave violently
- (112).

From the above discussion, it is clear that the images of boys and young men present in the media lead to the persistence of harmful concepts of masculinity. Literature, in this case, does not pay serious attention to the right issues of men and that they are often portrayed in a negative light. It is because of the above-mentioned that it becomes imperative to explore the representation of male image in *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment*.

1.2.2 The Convergence between the Literary Tools and the Subversion of the Female Image

As the female novelists strive to correct the erroneous image of women presented in the earlier male literature, women writers have distinguished themselves by presenting new forms of writing. As “language is used by the powerful to oppress and silence their subordinates” (Cameron Deborah: 1), women writers use feminist language to subvert the masculinity discourse of supremacy and deploys a female-centred ideology. The feminist discourse makes women characters visible as protagonists and narrators with strong female agency and visibility at the same time as it attempts to subvert the stereotypical portraiture of female characters.

The literary feminist novels undermine the discourse of a fixed gender image through the language of fantastic, which in turn dismantles the notion of masculine/feminine as binary opposition. Nadine Gordimer observes in *The Black Interpreters* that, “writers choose their plots, characters and literary styles; their themes choose them...in this sense, the writer is the voice of the people beyond any glib political connotation of the phrase.’ (1). Congruently, the feminist novels interrogate gender difference through a deconstruction of the authority of the first-person male speaking subject. Through familiar themes of metamorphosis and decomposition of the speaking subject, feminist novels appropriate the fantastic for a self-conscious treatment of language as the site where gender identity is created and; therefore, contested. Correspondingly, Martin Gaité in *Desde la Ventana* shows how women writers

have developed among themselves unique forms of communication that allow them, if not to escape the oppression to which they were subjected, at least to confront it, analyse it and attempt to come to terms with it (32).

The literary devices used by the feminist literary writers to achieve the literary aims raise the question of whether their narratives are rhetorical structures that distort as much as they reveal or they are sources of illusions in so far as the male portraiture are concerned.

1.2.3 The Impact of Literary Stereotypes

Stereotypes have the potential to produce hatred, violence, and misunderstandings. If we consider the number of messages that are transmitted and consumed each day coupled with the assertion that stereotypes actually reinforce and amplify personal stereotypes, there is certainly a huge probability that, particularly, harmful effect will ensue. Lester, Paul and Ross, Susan in *Images that Injure* add, “In this way, the media can be said to exacerbate the problem of prejudice and discrimination” (3). If traditional stereotyped sex roles continue to be portrayed in the literary novels, these out-of-date sexist depictions will ultimately be providing dangerously inaccurate messages. The impact on society will be detrimental in terms of the non-acceptance of those women and men who do not fit these images but also through the way in which they are potentially preparing young people for a world that simply does not exist anymore.

Past studies, according to Carter, Cynthia and Steiner, Linda in *Introduction to Critical Readings: Media and Gender*, have found that depiction of sex roles in literature have been incredibly narrow, with women often only being shown within the domestic private sphere (13-14). In recent years; however, social expectations and social conditions have changed dramatically due to feminism movement. This has impacted the role of men but most significantly, the role of women in today’s society. It is in the face of this change that Tuchman Benard in *Practising History* strongly believes that the way in which sex roles are

portrayed in literature should not be disregarded but the implications should seriously be addressed (3-4). In literature, for instance, the idealized presentations of perfectly proportioned beautiful women are what Elliot Deni in his article “Moral Responsibilities and the Power of the Pictures” refers to as “images that injure”. This is because such images provide a basis for comparison to the whole society, thus creating unreasonable and often unattainable physical expectations that consequently give the impression that real women fall short (8).

What the impact of stereotyping; therefore, indicates is the power of the norm. Accordingly, Newton J. and Williams R. in “The Avacado and the Asporagus: Searching for Masculine and Feminine Archetypes within the Stereotyping Theatre of Sexualised Mediotypes” claim that “the misappropriation of archetypes to promote a divided, always struggling, never good enough who seeks wholeness through the attempt to live the stereotyped, sexualised; character consuming lives of characters of literature is the benchmark of normalcy in our culture. There we see the constant portrayal of women’s and men’s images through the archetypes condensed into restricted caricatures of mediated normalcy that reflect little of the complexity or diversity of actual human character”(218). The impact of stereotypes thus illustrates the power the literary novels possess and the influence they can exert. For instance, by rewriting the image of women in literature, the contribution of women writers to humanist values is represented by a female identity that counter-balanced what they saw as the essentially destructive and anti-humanist male attitude and position in the society. Therefore, the female identity is represented as subject in process, a subject that is always in progressive motion

In *Celebrity Culture*, Ellis Cashmore’s realization of the media’s power to influence thoughts, feelings and behaviours (208) becomes the impetus that spawns the interest of this research to look into the social impact of the stereotypical presentation of male image on the

male characters in the two selected novels. As Octavio Paz in “The Labyrinth of Solitude; The Other Mexico” puts it that “women are prisoners of the image that male society imposes on them (345), this research argues that men too are prisoners of the image they have thus created for themselves through the influence of literature. What this study highlights is the view that it is not only the restricted traditional portrayals of female image that can cause harm but the stereotypical male image, can be just as damaging; thus, this research attempts to bridge this gap.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Gender enterprise has occupied the attention of a number of literary creative writers and literary critics with most of them focusing on the feminist project of it. Regardless of the strains of feminist women writers subscribe to, one constant is the desire of women writers to subvert or invert the traditions that have determined discursive practices. They constantly seek to break free of the barriers that have been constructed by patriarchal society; whether on the thematic, structural or semiotic level, they examine the limits that have been imposed on language, literature and, by extension, women in general and call attention to the inconsistencies and injustices inherent in a system that has sought to exclude them on the basis of gender.

It is not surprising; therefore, that most of the 19th century female writers foregrounded women as the subject of their novels or expressed female experience in the literary rebellion against their deliberate marginalisation. The significance of their contributions to the literary establishment lies in the fact that the women writers have seen the female identity as a continuous process of becoming and thus have reflected its flexibility. This can be considered as an alternative method of character portrayal. It is vital to note that the study of gender has mainly consisted of womanist critiques of literature and society with

a view to showing the plight of women. Little attention has been given to the analysis of women's writings in relation to the representation of male image.

It is also imperative to note that the feminist literary writers have put a claim that male authors have created stereotypical female characters which they aim to revisit and subvert. This claim raises a number of questions that become of import for this study. For instance, this research is interested in exploring whether the female writers similarly create male stereotypes as they attempt to bring to the fore the female characters lived lives in the male dominated arenas. Most importantly, this inquiry is attracted to finding out the literary tools that the feminist literary writers use in their portrayal of male image as they attempt to articulate the women characters' experiences and how these devices shape the representation of male image. Finally, since the female writers herald the female characters and the heroines are able to resist social confinement and social limitations by the independent mind which combines strong will and moral integrity, this study; therefore, is concerned with the social effects of the representation of the male image on the characters in selected novels.

If the erroneous assumption that the male experience is equivalent to human experience, distorted the image of women as literary characters, such an assumption has also limited our perceptions of men in literature. It is because of the above mentioned concerns that this research investigates the denigration of male image in *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment*.

1.4 Research questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the denigrating male image brought out in Marjorie Oludhe's novels?
2. How are literary devices used to depict the adverse male image?
3. What are the social impacts of the denigration of the male image on the characters in the selected novels?

1.5 Objectives of the study

The main aim of this study is to explore Marjorie Oludhe's works as a site for interrogation of the denigration of male image in Kenya.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Explore the denigrating male image brought out in Marjorie Oludhe's literary selected novels.
2. Examine the literary devices that Marjorie Oludhe use to depict the adverse male image in her selected novels.
3. Analyse the social impacts of the denigration of the male image on the characters in the selected novels.

1.6 Scope of the Study

Concerning the scope of the study, the parameters that guided this research of *The Denigration of Male Image* in the selected novels are genre, objective, and author. This research selected the genre of the novel on the assumption that is the microcosm of society, that there is a link between the novel and human experience; the novel can offer an encounter with life in all its diverse aspects. Lucien Goldmann in his book *Towards the Sociology of the Novel*, sees the novel form as the literary transposition of everyday life within a specific social context in which it occurs (2). For Simon Gikandi in his text *Reading the African Novel*, the African novel is "an instrument of understanding on the individual and social-cultural level" (x). In the same vein, Shatto Urthur Gakwandi in *The Novel and Contemporary Experience in Africa* views the novel as the main vehicle for analysing and commenting on contemporary life in African societies. According to him:

More than any other forms, the novel can evoke the whole way of a people at any given time. Through this, or through a selection of interrelated aspects of life, it can

analyse the basic social structure of a given society and show how the total life of the individual is affected by the conditions in which he lives. The reader is then able to evaluate these conditions of life by the way they affect individuals. This capacity which the novel alone possesses, has been seized upon by African artists and been used to raise issues which go beyond private conduct into problems of morality in public affairs. Social realism has been the principal tool by which this has been done (128-129).

It is precisely for the above reasons that this research; therefore, has focused on *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment*. This study is limited to Marjorie Oludhe since she is consistent with the denigration of male image.

This research is also restricted to three main objectives, that is, to conduct a textual analysis of the denigrating male image in *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment* since the research in the field of women's' writings has tended to be concerned mostly with women representation. In addition, this study explores the literary tools that have been employed to shape the representation of male image as well as the social impact of the male representation on the characters in the selected novels. A working theoretical framework that this research can thus be understood within is Queer.

1.7 Justification of the Study

Since the 1970s, gender has been a central concern of literary studies in Africa, as feminist theory precipitated a critical debate around the representation of African woman in literature which until then had been dominated by men. Since then the representation of men has served as a backdrop against which to analyse African woman's experiences. Lisa Lindsay and Stephen Miescher in *Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa* argue that it is not surprising; therefore, that African scholars have now begun to include concepts of masculinity in gender studies in order to understand how they play out in gender relations (1-

3). In other words, there has been more interest in examining the ways in which men behave, particularly in relation to women. Although, some important works on masculinity in African societies in recent years have been seen, which include Robert Morells in *Southern Africa* (2001), Lisa Lindsay and Stephen Miescher's *Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa* (2003), and Lahoucine Ouzgane and Robert Morell's *African Masculinity: Men in Africa from the Late Nineteenth Century to the Present* (2005), the field is still narrow. In addition, research on the representations of male image in literary novels, with particular attention to the works of African woman, is still a very new area of investigation. This particular study; therefore, is refreshing in the sense that it departs from the above common trajectory by engaging with the masculine project dimension of it in *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment*.

The women writers' perspectives offer a different vision of men; one not seen anywhere else in African fiction, which until recently was dominated by male writers. It is a vision of female writers who are interested in, and concerned with relationships between men and women in contemporary African societies. This study; therefore, is intended to provide a new analytical window into the perspective of the African woman writer on this subject.

The study of gender has mainly consisted of feminist critique of literature and society with a view to showing the plight of women. Little attention has been given to the analysis of women's writing with the tools that the Queer theoretical framework provides. This study therefore contributes to a more balanced field of critical gender writing in Africa. Through the analysis of the male characters in the selected novels, this study seeks to offer a better understanding of the African woman's attitude toward her male counterpart in fictional works.

This research attempts to reorder the contemporary practice of gender division into comparative binaries and strive to advocate for the Third space. Gender should be perceived

as performance where actors take different roles in different contexts. This, therefore, means that identity should be viewed as free floating and not placed within a single restrictive sexual orientation. This research is meant to influence literary writers to rethink the binary treatment of gender where the male characters are ridiculed in contrast to the female counterparts.

It is hoped that this research will help literary scholars, policy makers, educationists, researchers, and politicians to re-evaluate the use of identity categories as instruments of regulatory regimes, either as normalizing categories of oppressive structures or as rallying points for libratory contestation of that very oppression. Besides, this research is purposed to help the above stakeholders realize that the identity category politics does little to shift things and that time has come to reflect on the direction that the gender politics is taking societies. The policy makers may envisage gender changes that are more democratic, more humane and of reasonable relationships between men and women, among women, and among men. This will go hand in hand to ensure that the government agenda for gender parity is realised.

The study intends to assist in coming up with literature materials that mirror equity, which is a bold step towards the emancipation and empowerment of all as well as promoting social justice and furthering the goals of GAD (Gender and Development). Based on Cornwall Andrea's argument in his book *Dislocating Masculinities: Comparative Ethnographies*, by disregarding the complexities of male experience, by characterising men as the 'problem', development initiatives that aim to be 'gender-aware' can fail to address effectively the issues of equity and empowerment that are crucial in bringing about change (18).

If gender portrayed affects the self-image of the reader and in turn the achievements of an individual, then it is worth investigating Marjorie Oludhe's selected novels whose work ,paradoxically, is always a counter discourse to male imagination of femininity.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

This research is anchored on Queer theory. This theory is a field of post-structuralism critical theory that emerged in the early 1990's as an outgrowth of Queer studies and women studies. The works of Eve Sedgwick, Judith Butler and Lauren Berlant influence the theory. Queer theory builds upon feminist challenges. By foregrounding the female characters in fiction and giving them voice to relive their experiences in the male dominated sphere, the male characters become others. They are voiceless and marginalised as women characters are given dominance. The oppressor-victim paradigm does not lead to change that is reasonable and democratic. Queer theory; therefore, develops to challenge the feminist theory on what it perceives as its weakness.

Queer theory expands its focus to encompass any kind of sexual activity or identity that falls into normative and deviant categories. Similarly, David Halperine in Saint Foucault: *Towards a Gay Hagiography* defines Queer Theory as whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, and the dominant. It is an identity without an essence. Queer, then demarcates not positivity but positionality vis-à-vis the normative. It is a process of discovering and exposing underlying meanings, distinctions, and relations of power in larger culture that others oversimplify (8). The gender equilibrium that the feminist literary writers intended to arrive at has not been fully realised. Their main target was to bring about reasonable changes in the existing relationship between women and men. However, by using the male backdrop to articulate the plight of women characters in the male dominated spaces, the feminist literary writers end up creating male characters whose image is perceived as standard, dominant and central. This kind of trajectory create gender imbalance. Using the tools that Queer theoretical framework provide, this research is not opposing feminist politics but interrogating the representation of male image in this quest for gender parity.

For the purpose of this study into *the denigration of male image* in the selected novels, the Queer theoretical framework is underpinned by Judith Butlers' perspective. Her approach recognises that there is no universally valid definition of masculinity and that the male image is as a result of social processes of gender construction. The Queer theoretical framework utilises the below-mentioned tenets which guide this research in discussing the objectives of this study with reference to *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment*.

Queer theory's main project is contesting the categorisation of gender and sexuality; identities are not fixed -they cannot be categorised and labelled- because identities consist of varied components and that to categories by one characteristic is wrong. Harmoniously, O'Farrel Mary in her article "Queer Theory" in the *Outburst Magazine* recognises Queer as being focused upon ripping apart the modern theory practice of division into comparative binaries (themes). Queer theorists believe that Queers represent a "third sex" in order to resist the ever-oppressive binary system that engulfs modern societal understandings, inquiry, and theory (13). Therefore, despite its title, the theory's main goal is to destabilise identity categories, which are designed to "sexed subject" and place individuals within a single restrictive sexual orientation. Using the category of women, the feminist literary writers articulate the experiences of women in the male dominated arenas to show their trouble. The male characters become the source of their women counterparts' pains bringing about the binary treatment of gender. It is against this backdrop that this research explores the representation of the male image as Marjorie Oludhe revisits and reconstructs the distorted female image in the male written novels and whether or not these lead to the false universalization of male image in her novels, *Coming to Birth* and the *Present Moment*.

Moreover, as instruments of regulatory regimes, this research brings into play Queer theory as a rallying point for a libratory contestation of the binary treatment of gender in the Marjorie Oludhe's selected novels. According to Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble*, identity is

a double-edged sword. “Identity categories,” she writes, “tend to be instruments of regulatory regimes, whether as normalizing categories of oppressive structures or as rallying points for a liberatory contestation of that very oppression” (72). Using a Foucauldian perspective, Judith Butler argues that discourse cannot only be an instrument and an effect of power but also a hindrance, an obstacle, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy (72). The duality of identity is a hindrance or an obstacle to the full achievement of equity as well as the realization of development goals. The male characters in feminist literary writings are always viewed through the eyes of female protagonists to bring forth the experiences of the female characters. As such, this research interests itself in finding out the resultant male image in the feminists novels through the lens of *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment*.

Furthermore, rather than opening up possibilities for a person to choose his or her own individual identity, feminism closes the options down. Compatibly, Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* observes that Feminism makes a mistake by trying to assert that women are a group with common characteristics and interests. This approach performs an unwitting regulation and reification of gender relation reinforcing a binary view of gender relations in which human beings are divided into two clear cut groups, women, and men (115). Feminists reject the idea that biology is destiny, but then develop an account of patriarchal culture, which assumes that masculine, and feminine genders are inevitably built by culture upon male and female bodies, making the same destiny just as inescapable. The above-mentioned argument allows no room for choice, difference, or resistance. In other words, rather than being a fixed attribute in a person, gender should be seen as a fluid variable which shifts and changes at different times.

Queer theory advocates for the deconstructions of gender that aims at a new and better identity and involves the rejection of identity politics altogether. As Judith Butler reminds us:

My understanding of queer is a term that desires that you do not have to present an identity card before entering a meeting. Heterosexuals can join the queer movement. Bisexuals can join the queer movement. It is not being lesbian. Queer is not being gay...Queer is an argument against [a] certain normativity. (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 56) Sic.

Using the above argument; therefore, Queer movement does not build a barricade between men and women as two different kettles of fish. Both men and women have the privilege to choose whether to perform feminine or masculine roles in different contexts. Identity politics does little to bring about constructive change. To refer to someone as a man or a woman, therefore, is not simply to state a fact: such statements always to some extent are drawn on and reinforce ideas about gender. What is needed is a total rejection of identity category politics, as it simply leads to the vicious cycles of disgruntlements. It is imperative to note that the feminist main goal in literary studies was to distort the stereotypical representations of female characters that were reflected in the male-authored texts. Besides, their vision was to bring about equity in gender relations. This, subsequently, saw women characters move from the state of passivity to activity. However, this has brought a concern in so far as the male characters' representations are concerned. This tenet; therefore, enables this research to explore the new image of male characters brought out as Marjorie Oludhe deconstructs both the female and the male gender roles to bring about change in *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment*.

Queer theory promotes the principle of non-straightness. It posits an understanding of identity that emphasizes shifting precincts, incongruities, and cultural constructions that transfigure depending on historical and cultural milieu. According to Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* "To queer" is to mark "standard" identity as outlandish and disconcerted, to repudiate gender as a naturalized social-sexual role and promote the concept of "non-

straightness,”- a third space challenging the hegemony of "straight" ideology (78). Identity; therefore, should not be placed within a single sexual restrictive orientation. Culture is dynamic, thus, identity is bound to shift and unsettle. The concept of non-straightness is vital for this research. The deconstruction of the female gender has led to the fragmentation of female characters that are able to perform both the masculine and feminine roles. The category of women in fiction has been dismantled; however, little has changed in so far as the male gender is concerned. It is against this principle of non-straightness that this research evaluates whether or not Marjorie Oludhe places the image of the male characters within a single restrictive sexual orientation in *Coming to Birth* and *the Present Moment* which consequently, undermines the individual agency.

Queer theory also explores issues of sexuality, power, and marginalised populations in literature and culture. A primary concern in Queer theory is the manner in which gender and sexuality are constructed. This study endeavours to analyse from the point of view of Marjorie Oludhe's attempt to deconstruct the myth that women are others and evaluate the portrayal of the male characters in *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment*. This Queer construct aids this research to determine the nature of social and sexual relations that exist in the selected novels and whether they produce desirable power relations.

The conservative effects of identity classifications are understood as lying in their ability to naturalise themselves as self-evident descriptive categories. If Queer is to avoid simply replicating the normative claims of earlier gender formations, it must be conceived as a category in constant formation. According to Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble*:

Queer will have to remain that which is, in the present, never fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage and in the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes, and perhaps also yielded in favour of terms that do that political work more effectively. (112)

The stressing of the partial, flexible and responsive nature of Queer offers a corrective to those naturalised and seemingly self-evident categories of identification that constitutes traditional formations of identity politics. It specifies the ways in which the logic of identity politics--which is to gather similar subjects so that they can achieve shared aims by mobilising a minority-rights discourse--is far from natural or self-evident. By gathering women into a single category, the feminist literary writers have created female characters that defy the cultural barriers and achieve personal growth. However, the ability of identity categorisation to naturalise itself creates a concern for this research. The concern for this research is to explore the social effects of the representation of male image on the characters in *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment*.

Finally, the role of language as a construct in identity politics is of import to this research. This research does not look at language in its entirety but its stylistic aspects in the presentation of male image. Just like Sedgwick Eve in the *Epistemology of the Closet* reveals that several sexual contradictions yield modern misunderstanding, language is a relevant force behind sexuality, and labelled speech acts are ultimately the proof of the nature of one's sexuality. Linguistic elements play pivotal role in the description of one's identity. Actors in performance use different linguistic elements in different social contexts (36). The feminist literary writers have used literary tools to achieve their literary aims of emancipating and empowering women characters in fiction. In contrast, the same have been well thought-out to display how the male characters were responsible for the women's oppressions and exploitations. This research; thus, explores the literary devices that are used by Marjorie Oludhe to mark the male image in her selected novels as she uses the same to articulate the experiences of women characters as well as distort the falsification of female image.

1.9 Conclusions

This research seeks to argue for the pivotal role that context plays in the performance of gender besides other factors such as class, status, race, and others. In attempting to situate this study within a Queer theoretical orientation, it emerges that universal application of feminist theory to men's experiences does not yield well in addressing masculinities in different geographical regions and even within the same regions. Therefore, there was need for this research to contest the restrictive placement of male gender role representations in the selected novels and to point out the diversification of gender role performances within specific geographical, historical, and cultural dimensions which is informed by men's diverse experiences in different parts of the world. In order to situate this research within the Queer theoretical constructs, this research embraces Judith Butler's approach in addressing the straightness of gender representation; categorisation of gender; deconstruction of gender; issues of sexuality, power, and marginalisation; conservative effects of identity classification, and finally the role of literary devices in the vilification of male images.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

In this section, a review of related literature on this research is done by first, looking at the body of literature done on feminists' works; secondly, exploring other literature relevant to this study. This helps this research to gain insight in what scholars and researchers have done in the field of gender and identify the gaps that this study fills.

2.2 The Denigrating Male Image

In a classic titled *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon Frantz argues that Colonialism, decolonization, and globalization create many situations where power is not firmly established, where conflict or disorder prevail. Colonial power is met, from the start, by resistance (36). He says:

Decolonisation never takes place unnoticed, for it influences individuals and modifies them fundamentally. It transforms spectators crushed with their inessentiality into privileged actors, with the grandiose glare of history's floodlights upon them. It brings a natural rhythm into existence, introduced by new men, and with it a new humanity.

Decolonization is the veritable creation of new men. (36)

It is worth appreciating the efforts the feminist writers bring into the literary works to emancipate women from the jaws of patriarchy. These, consequently, modify women fundamentally, as floodgates of opportunities open to them. They are given voices and agencies that tremendously move them from the edges to the centre stage. However, the interest of this research is to explore the influence that feminism has on the male characters and how this influence modifies their image. Furthermore, the aforesaid prompt this research to explore the new male image representation in the wake of decolonisation and determine

whether this produce more democracy, more humanity and reasonable relationships between men and women characters in *Coming To Birth* and *The Present Moment*.

Cornwall, Andrea and Lindisfarne, Nancy, in their article titled “Dislocating Masculinity: Gender, Power and Anthropology”, argues that Gender Analysis offers tools for investigating the material bases of difference between women and men. Yet, gender analysis tells very little about how gender identities and roles are experienced by individual women and men within communities. Rather, it is used to delineate distinctions between what women in general and men in general do, in order to guide planners (93). Sexual difference is taken as the starting point for analysis and gross commonalities among women and men are presumed. This crude and simplistic form of analysis offers little in the way of understanding the dynamics of differences in communities. Andrea and Nancy further argue:

Each day of our lives and over the course of our lives, the identities we have as women or men are not fixed or absolute, but multiple and shifting. Gender relations are context bound: in one setting we might behave in one way, while in others we might behave differently (93).

Gender analysis ought to transcend gender categorisation and view gender as performance that varies in different social context. Gender relations are context bound. In each cultural context, there is a range of available models of masculinity. Dimensions of difference can offer ways in which men can begin to re-evaluate some of the difficulties they face as men and enhance awareness of situations in which the roles are reversed. By recognising that men also feel powerless, scope can be offered for men to reflect on their behaviour toward those they feel they have power over. As behaviour is learnt, it can also be unlearned and relearned. Using this backdrop of discussion, this research seeks to find out how the male image is displayed in different contexts by individual men and whether the male image is presented at variance or uniform in *The Present Moment* and *Coming to Birth*.

Florence Stratton, in her book, *Contemporary African Literature and The Politics of Gender*, argues that the conversion of Mother Africa trope into a prostitute metaphor is a recurring feature of contemporary tradition in men's fiction. The trope is used to exploit the male-female power relations of domination and subordination. She posits that many male writers in African literature like Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Cyprian Ekwensi, and others, "woman their texts with prostitutes." The prostitute metaphor is used by these male writers to encode women as agents of moral corruption and contamination in the society. These writers tend to represent the prostitute as a miserable and an exploited woman whose redemption can only come through her repatriation from her urban operation grounds to the village. She argues that women who become prostitutes are moral but that they are compelled by the kind of life that they face daily to reinvent their survival strategies in an environment where poverty is increasing, economic life changing and trading are becoming unbearable (21). The presentation of women as agents of moral corruption and contamination and their subsequent repatriation from the urban ground to the village can be read as a means of restricting women's personal growth and limiting their freedom to exploit their full potentials. The feminists' mission to decode this misnomer is worth appreciating as it gives women the human face and subverts the myth of the Garden of Eden. However, this study departs from the exploration of women's image in the prostitution platform and interests itself in finding out how the feminist literary writers through the lens of Marjorie Oludhe's *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment* exhibit the male image in the prostitution arena as they exonerate the female characters from castigation in the same.

In an essay, "Master Plans: Designing (National) Allegories of Urban Space and Metropolitan Subjects for Post-Colonial Kenya", Joseph Slaughter examines *Coming to Birth* in terms of how individual characters situate themselves in the urban and political spaces and their definition of these spaces in relation to their participation in them. Joseph Slaughter

appreciates Marjorie Oludhe's exploration of Nairobi as a political space that enlightens people to negotiate the urban space (33). Joseph Slaughter's argument suggests that the definition of individuals within the city mark their political spaces and their participation in such spaces. The city becomes an offshoot for each individual's personal growth. The urban space opens up opportunities for the characters to explore and exploit hence defines them as individuals. Characters are perceived in *Coming to Birth* in terms of negotiating the political space to achieve optimum growth. Paulina, in *Coming to Birth*, is heralded for realizing social individuation as she utilizes the resources at her disposal to grow. It becomes her story. This research seeks to find out what happens to male characters as they attempt to situate themselves in the urban space. The interest of this study; therefore, is to explore the male image representation as the male characters negotiate the political arena in contrast to their female counterparts in Marjorie Oludhe's selected novels.

The city and the nation stand as "constant compulsions on the individual into them" (ibid). This idea forms part of the subject of the study in order to interrogate how the image of Martin in *Coming to Birth* is exhibited as he moves into the urban space in contrast to Pauline whose movement into the city becomes the fertile ground for her growth.

The feminist writers in their bid to expose the worst inheritances of patriarchy liberally manipulate the male characters to show how they are degraded both in fiction and in real life. Silas Nyanchwani in his commentary titled "Kenya: The Danger of Feminist Literature" reinforces the above observation and argues that the tables are turned barely a half century later. By endlessly empowering women, men are 'disempowered', and that if this is not corrected, a mess is being created. He argues that if this is not ironed out early enough men may have no voice (14). This argument forms a rich site that gives this study an insight in interrogating Marjorie Oludhe's selected novels on the ways in which she portrays the

image of men characters that consequently have a social impact on them in the selected novels.

Connell Raewyn in her book *Masculinities* emphasises on the multiplicity of and in social constructions of masculinities/femininities, gender identities and sexuality. Masculinity and femininity are inherently relational concepts, and commonly placed as polar opposites. She argues that masculinity and femininity are internalized sex roles that are the product of socialization. Due to the different experiences and situations of individual men, an array of possible masculinities can result. However, this is not the case. Men are grouped together to share similar experiences and situations hence closing up the different projections of masculinities. She further defines sex roles as ‘men and women enacting a general set of expectations attached to one’s gender.’ Sex roles are still seen as extensions of biological differences due to the differentiation of function within a social group. Gender ends up reduced to two polarized categories, with people contesting sexuality or gender being classified as “deviant”, as opposed to “normal”. She contends that gender and gender identities are social constructs that can be changed. It is also contended that as role norms are social facts, they change when agents of socialization such as the family, media and education transmit new expectations (98). Socialization is such a powerful tool that we are not like robots moulded by our culture, who succumb to prescribed gender role behaviour uncritically. If this were so, gender role change would not be evident. Using this backdrop this research interrogates the different manifestations of the male image in the various contexts to establish whether the male characters perform gender at variance to bring about the different manifestations of masculinity or not.

Carroll Davies in a “Review” in *Black Issues* observes that *Coming to Birth* is an intricately woven novel, which ‘emphasizes issues involved in overcoming the constraints of a patriarchal society, and the ways in which ordinary people like Paulina are affected by

history' (53). This argument is relevant to the study since this research is not concerned with how women overcome patriarchal structures limiting them from self-empowerment but how the image of men is deconstructed in the empowerment and emancipation process of women from the shackles of patriarchy in Marjorie Oludhe's selected novels. This study is also interested in finding out what happens to the male characters as they attempt to overcome the constraints of patriarchal society as well as how they are affected by history in the selected novels under study.

Cornwall, Andrea and Lindisfarne, Nancy in *Dislocating Masculinity: Gender, Power and Anthropology* argue that by deconstructing cultural assumptions about being a man, awareness is raised about the ways in which some of these assumptions leave people in a no-win situation. In addition, by working from this analysis to build the confidence to choose to behave differently, men are offered the means to empower themselves to change (94).

If gender is to be everybody's issue, then we need to find constructive ways of working with men as well as with women to build the confidence to do things differently. Just because some men occupy subject-positions in some settings that lend them power over people, it does not necessarily mean that these positions are congruent with all aspects of their lives and therefore define them as people. This research; therefore, examines how Marjorie Oludhe deconstructs the cultural assumptions about being a man and whether this leaves the male and the female characters in a win-win situation in *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment*. It is also concerned with whether the deconstructions of the cultural assumptions build sureness in men to choose to behave differently in selected novels.

A quick reading of critical men's studies reveal that the subject of males as an integral composition of gender has not been as widely explored as has been the subject of women. In most cases studies on gender automatically venture into female concerns. These assume gender to be synonymous to female. Lahousine Ouzgane and Robert Morrell in *African*

Masculinities observe that the subject of masculinities in Africa remains ignored (1). These authors further argue that men are not the same, a fact that they assert has “occasioned the shift from the concept of masculinity to that of masculinities” (4). The scholars are of the opinion that masculinity is not biological but that it is the cultural ideal established for what it is to be a man (ibid).

This negligence of the male then raises the pertinent questions such as whether the male is contented and has no reason to complain. Paul Hoch in *White Hero Black Beast Racism, Sexism and the Mask of Masculinity* is of the opinion that men have a myriad of concerns but are simply afraid to voicing them owing to social, economic and historical structures that have promoted male oppression (6). The male oppression in turn led to female oppression as carried out by men. This study; therefore, attempts to bring to the front the image of men created as the plight of women is voiced in *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment*

Wesley Brown in *Women Writers in Black Africa*, in her analysis of the work of black women writers, observes that in these works, the victims of inequality and male insensitivity are not only victimised by their external circumstances, but are also at a disadvantage because they lack strength, resourcefulness, and a vital sense of their own integrity as women (181). The critic notes that “their inner weakness often stems from the degree to which they have internalised male notions about female inadequacy and about masculine privilege” (ibid). She further postulates that all the major (female) writers are “preoccupied with the women’s personal strength or lack of it when they analyse sexual roles and sexual inequality” (181). This study acknowledges Wesley Brown’s contribution to the criticism of female literary works and gives this research justification to focus on the male character in Marjorie Oludhe’s *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment*.

Katwina Mule in *Women's Space. Women's Visions: politics, Poetics and Resistance in African Women's Vision*, asserts that criticisms of African women writing in the 1980s and 1990s were concerned with the issues of victimhood, identity and agency(s). Thus female authors are redefining images of womanhood, providing new visions, and reshaping distorted characterisations of African women in fiction. Mule further argues that for women writers, the act of writing is an attempt to balance if not to overturn, the degrading stereotypes created by colonial as well as African male texts (ibid). In this study, an attempt has been made to identify the redefining of image of male characters as portrayed by Marjorie Oludhe in the two selected novels.

2.3 Literary Devices Used to Depict the Adverse Male Image

According to Oriane Sarrasin, Ute Gabriel and Pasca Gygax in their book titled *Sexism and Attitudes toward Gender Neutral Language: The Case of English, French and German*, contextual characteristics are likely to affect attitudes toward gender-neutral languages as well as their relations to sexist stances. For example, languages vary in the number of linguistic elements that need to be changed for establishing gender-neutral language as well as in the nature of those changes (i.e. whether a disputable noun can simply be replaced by another noun, or whether a longer construction is needed). Such linguistic differences not only influence concerns about the stylistic elements of the language but also the forming, implementation and success of policies related to gender neutral language (97). The usages of language vary depending on the contextual characteristics. This therefore means that there is no unified ideology in language as it is dynamic; it depends widely on social relations and contexts. Consequently, the stylistic aspects of language reflect on this dynamism hence destructions of their relations to sexist stances. The forming, implementation and success of policies related to gender neutral language is a problem. It does not take to board that language is contextual and such policies are admissions that

language cannot penetrate beyond the surface and is distinctly used in gender binary. The interest of this research is to explore how the literary devices are deployed in the presentation of the male image in the selected novels.

Sims Andrea Dorothy in her book *Transgender and Queer Culture: Language and Gender* argues that language is used to create social identity specifically because self-definition through action is unavailable for girls (64). Language in the above-mentioned becomes a tool for self-definition. It becomes a means for the liberation of girls since the society is restrictive. In brief, women writers had to work against the grain in order to write. Yet writing was the only way left to women to assert individuality and autonomy. Excluded from many social, political, and economic activities, women turned to writing. In other words, women writers had before them the enormous task of defying their marginality and subversion, not only in the house, but in the society. Language; therefore, is instrumental in voicing the concerns of women and staging a platform for resistance of women's mistreatment which is noble. As language is used to free women from patriarchal bondage, this research explores the deployment of stylistic aspects of language to create male's social image in *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment*.

Columbia Muriungi, examines in her essay, "The Sweet Pepper: Prostitution Declosetted in Kenyan Women's Writing", using the lens of Marjorie Oludhe's *Victoria and Murder in Majengo* and Genga – Idowu's *Lady in Chains* shows how the two Kenyan women writers subvert the notion of the prostitute as a home breaker, an undesirable character or a morally degenerate person. She explores how Marjorie Oludhe and Genga Idowu conceal or camouflage the activities of the prostitutes while at the same time trying to project prostitution as a career and as a productive economic activity like any other. This camouflage is crystallized in the way the two writers manipulate language by making use of euphemism to refer to sexual episodes in the novel giving the prostitutes a human face (3). In

this deliberate effort to cushion women prostitutes from censure, a concern is raised in what happens to men who are prostitutes. This study therefore analyses the diction deployed in the presentation of the image of male characters in the prostitution arena as the women characters are cushioned from criticism in *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment*.

Alastair Pennycook in his presentation titled “Language and Gender: A Brief Literature Review” argues that the growth of feminist work increases the relationship between language and gender which go beyond folk linguistic assumptions about how men and women use language, to different syntactical, phonological or lexical uses of language to aspects of conversational analysis (1). In other words, the different stylistic aspects of language are used to reinforce the binary treatment of gender and the linguistic difference both reflect and reproduce social difference. This study investigates the literary devices that Marjorie Oludhe uses in the selected novels to depict the male image in relation to the female counterparts.

Previous studies on Marjorie Oludhe have emphasised that the author’s prominence as writer lies in the manner in which she blends history and art to reflect the experiences women go through. While not underrating this concern with content value and social relevance of her work, Peter Wasamba in his dissertation “Language in Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye’s Fiction” demonstrates that Marjorie Oludhe’s excellence in creative writing lies more in her stylistic facility. He highlights the fact that the author uses vocabulary, translational English, syntactic options and symbolism in *Coming to Birth*, *The Present Moment* and *Home Coming In* to enhance readers’ understanding of characters, theme, and meaning. Wasamba contends that the study of language reveals that the author brings a fresh awareness of familiar themes like religion, freedom, identity and gender issues in ways that show a deeper perception of linguistic possibilities available to her. In his work, Wasamba demonstrates how transitivity choices reflect inequality in social relations. He concludes that Marjorie Oludhe’s use of

language is functional (iv). This study concurs with Wasamba's observation and interests itself in unearthing how Marjorie Oludhe in *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment* uses the stylistic facility to discuss gender issues, particularly, with reference to male characters.

Pamela Oloo in her dissertation "Language and Gender: A Transitivity of Choices Analysis of Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source*" focuses on language and gender and undertakes a feminist stylistic analysis of Margaret Ogola's novel *The River and the Source*. She examines the changing roles of women in an inevitably changing environment (v). In her study, she sets out to identify the linguistic resources- process types (material or mental), verb types (transitive or intransitive) and the participants' roles (subject or object) of the characters that portray changing roles of women in society (2). Oloo notes that the male characters in *The River and the Source* have very short life spans (5). She concludes that through transitivity choices made and by designating grammatical and social subject as female, Ogola discredits the male subject and privileges the female subject (103). The critic further observes that men "fall apart" in Ogola's fiction in order to make room for women, hence by the end of part one all the male characters are either dead or in exile- thus creating a new narrative space for the representation of women (104). According to Oloo, through various transitivity options, Ogolla is clearly seen to have succeeded in coming up with positive image of the female character- as subject rather than object, active rather than passive (102). This research acknowledges Oloo's contribution to the criticism of female literary works and gives this research justification to focus on the male image in female works. This study not only looks into the linguistic resources but also the stylistic facility that Marjorie Oludhe uses to discredit the male characters in the present novels under study.

2.4 Social Impacts of the Denigration of the images of Male image

Cornwall Andrea and Lindisfarne Nancy in *Dislocating Masculinity: Gender, Power and Anthropology* say that one of the most obvious gaps in gender and development studies,

where new tools and new approaches are needed, is in relation to men. Feminist theory deals with men at one stroke: men are classed as the problem, those who stand in the way of positive change (95). The classification of men with gross commonalities spawns the interest of this research. This key insight seems to confirm that men's selfhood and agency have been overlooked. Addressing this paradox requires discursive discussions on the stereotypical portrayures of male characters in fiction and other areas of life for alternative views of identity. This research is grounded on the false universalization of male characters into the trajectory of agents of patriarchal ills.

Cornwall Andrea in his book *Missing Men? Reflections on Men, Masculinities and Gender in GAD* argues that when men are included in GAD they are often stereotyped as 'man the oppressor' in stark opposition to women who are the universal wives, mothers, victims and peacemakers. Similarly, she argues that gender relations are stereotyped where GAD discusses gender relations; it does not refer to relations between mothers and sons, brothers and sisters, female bosses and male employers, but rather to a distinct, oppressive, heterosexual relationship between men and women. (102). The use of victim-oppressor paradigm has enabled the feminist literary writers to relive the experiences of women and literarily rebel against the patriarchal oppressions. This is worth appreciating since the alternative views of identity and selfhood have been exploited through reasserting the identity of women in manners that transform stereotypes into liberating modes of selfhood. However, the feminist rhetoric risks perpetuating the derogatory views of men as agents and women as the victims This research; therefore, is interested in finding out how the male image is presented and the gender relations exhibited among the characters in the contexts of *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment*.

Sylvia Chant, and Matthew Guttmann, in their book *Mainstreaming Men into Gender and Development: Debates, Reflections and Experiences* observe that men and masculinities

need to be included in development analysis so that responsibility for achieving gender equality falls equally onto men and women, rather than becoming an additional burden for women. Development policy, which targets women only, particularly in relation to economic participation, credit, and sexual and reproductive health, is criticised for simply conferring more work onto women (87) Literature has a critical role to play in revolutionizing societies and bringing about states that are more democratic. However, this cannot be achieved if all focus is directed towards one gender while side lining another. Through the lens of Marjorie Oludhe's *The Present Moment* and *Coming to Birth*, this research explores how the male characters are mainstreamed into Gender and Development during the deconstruction process.

In *Writing African Women: Gender, Popular Cultures, and Literature in West Africa*, Stephanie Newell observes that, 'gender images and ideologies constantly shift to account for their changing status. This leads to emergence of new perspectives, which interrogates, reformulates, and analyses inherited popular codes' (111). She looks at the impact of social changes on society and how the society, in turn, responds to the changes. This argument examines how the male and the female images are rewritten in literature by pointing out that gender images are not static as they change with time. In turn, this argument provides a rich site for this research in examining how the male image is constructed and reconstructed in the society to cater for the changing times and the social impact that these have on the male characters in the present novels under study.

On the stereotypical depiction of female characters in the literary texts, Leslie Molaria Ogundipe, in an essay titled "The Female Writer and her Commitment" points out that an 'African woman has three responsibilities, namely, to tell about being a woman, describe reality from a woman's point of view and lastly a Third World Woman' (15). By telling women's experiences from a personal point of view, a true reflection of women's experiences

is handled and addressed in relation to issues that women grapple with in the society. The responsibilities mentioned above help the female writer to rectify the distorted images of African women as depicted in some literary works. This view aids this study to explore the male image representation as Marjorie Oludhe departs from stereotypical portrayal of women by creating complex and multidimensional female characters in the two selected novels.

In Kurts Roger John's article, "Urban Obsession, Urban Fears: The Post-Colonial Kenyan Novel", explores the relationship between the novel and the city, and how obsessions and fears about the urbanization are expressed and represented through different cohorts of Kenyan writers. He argues that African literatures are closely connected with the broader social contexts in which they are produced (68). This argument explores the connections of literature with the vital problems that come to be called "Third World Development Issues." The city provides an environment for political and personal growth. With the women's increasing exploitation of the city, this research explores the represented male image in Marjorie Oludhe's selected novels as the male and women characters exploit the opportunities provided by urban centres. It is imperative to note that women were traditionally confined in the rural set-ups. In their quest for freedom and empowerment, women ventured into the spaces that were traditionally left for men. Moreover, John Roger Kurts argues that the city is where the Kenyan novelists regularly project both the obsessions and fears of their society (68). It is within this thread of argument that this research examines the obsessions that the male characters have with the realization of ideal male image and the fears embedded in this fascination in *The Present Moment* and *Coming to Birth*.

Marie Kruger's *History, Nation, and Ghetto: Kenyan Women's Literature and the Ethics of Responsibility* explores issues of statecraft, identity and vulnerability in Marjorie Oludhe's *A Farm called Kishineva* and Yvonne Owuor's *Weight of Whispers*. She brings two historical experiences, as represented by the two writers, into a productive conversation that

links the Rwanda genocide and the long history of Jewish persecution in Europe and British settler colonialism in Kenya. She observes that Yvonne Owuor's *Weight of Whispers*, considers the plight of an elite Rwandese family seeking refuge in Kenya, and Marjorie Oludhe's *A Farm Called Kishinev*, which is an imaginative portrayal of what may have happened had Britain succeeded in effecting its proposal in the early twentieth century to establish a Jewish colony in East Africa. These reflect on the exclusionary practices of the modern nation states. Marie Kruger seeks to explore the following questions: What happens when identities such as "Tutsi" or "Jewish" are mobilized to achieve political ends? What are the consequences of the senses of victimhood or privilege that are frequently attached to identities assigned to citizens by modern processes of identification and population control (53)? This study borrows from her ideas by seeking to explore what happens when identities such as "men" or "women" are mobilised to achieve political ends and the consequences of the senses of victimhood (which in this case, men) or privilege (women) that are frequently attached to identities assigned to gender.

Cornwall Andrea in his book *Missing Men? Reflections on Men, Masculinities and Gender in GAD* thinks in terms of what Hollyway Wendy says in her article 'Gender Difference and the Production of Subjectivity' in Henriques, J *et al* book *Changing the Subject: Psychology, Social Regulation and Subjectivity*. She states:

Subject-positions' allows us to consider how people relate to the specific contexts in which people interact. At home, at work, in the church or mosque or associated with masculinity could men relieve themselves? It is hardly any wonder that men found this difficult. Not only were they told that they should give up positions that put them at an advantage, they were left without anything to value about being men. (54).

Based on the above observation, it would be; therefore, so hypocritical to talk about gender equity if one gender is excluded from the change process. Feminist literary writers through

the lens of Marjorie Oludhe subvert the stereotypical presentations of women, empower and emancipate the women characters by giving them voices and agencies, this research is concerned with what happens to male characters, particularly, in *Coming to Birth and The Present Moment* in this change process.

Oladele Taiwo in *Female Novelists of Modern Africa* contends that some female writers write to protest the image of women projected in the works of male writers (13). The scholar contends that some female writers “glorify the role played by women in society and thereby help to raise their status (ibid). He further observes that a female writer is “particularly concerned with the role of women in local, national, and international affairs and writes mainly to highlight these roles” (15). This study preoccupies itself with the social impacts of this glorification of women roles on the male characters in the selected novels as presented by Marjorie Oludhe.

Maurice Abungu in “ Character Transformation and Socio Historical Awareness in the Novels of Marjorie Oludhe “ undertakes a study of the novels of Marjorie Oludhe and examines character transformation and socio historical awareness (73). He concludes that Marjorie Oludhe “praises female characters by detailing issues affecting them in order to sensitize the society to have a fresher glance at their plight” (ibid). The critic also asserts that Marjorie Oludhe “subverts repugnant socio cultural structures that militate against women’s progress” (iv). While the study gives the socio-cultural structures that support subjugation of women, the analyses in this study seeks to examine the issues affecting male characters as a result of the vilification of their image and to sensitize the society to have a glance at men’s plight.

2.5 Conclusions

The literature review on gender indicates that the themes of denigration of men, marginalisation and fragmentation, as well as gendered language are important concerns of

this thesis since most literary works on gender are concerned with reliving the experiences of women under patriarchy, women emancipation, and consequently women empowerment. The misnomer of feminism consequently leads to the desire for alternative concepts and constructs that project male realities in its totality without placing them in a single restrictive framework.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter covers an overview of methodology used in the study. The discussion in the chapter is structured around the research design, population sampling, data collection and data analysis. The methodological choices are crucial in achieving the research objectives as well as informing the thesis statement with sufficient data.

3.2 Research Design

The road map for this research was analytical research design. The purpose of this research was to understand the meaning that is how the male characters in this study made sense of the physical events and behaviour taking place and how their understandings influenced their behaviour. This study also engaged in understanding the contexts within which the male characters acted and the influences these contexts had on their actions which ultimately led to the vilification of their image.

Since the aim of this study was to assess the presentation of the male image; literary devices used to portray the male image and social impacts of these presentations on male characters and therefore involved textual analysis, the most appropriate research design to facilitate in achieving the necessary findings was analytical research design. The basic process of conducting this analytical research process involved four main stages:

- i. Determining research population
- ii. Sampling
- iii. Data collection
- iv. Interpreting the results

3.3 Study Population

This research targeted a universe of a feminist literary writings as the medium for analysis since this study is built upon the feminist's challenges. Moreover, the feminist literary writings offered a wide range of male characters that were viewed through the eyes of female protagonists hence a suitable population for this research. Therefore, as it was the medium of feminist novels that this research was concerned with, it would have been an impossible task to analyse all the feminist novels hence boundaries needed to be set that determined the parameters of the investigation. Consequently, the accessible population was Marjorie Oludhe's thirteen novels as they were consistent with the denigration of male image.

3.4 Sampling Method and Size

The study used purposive sampling to select the two novels from the accessible population. *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment* were chosen out of the total thirteen novels so far written by Marjorie Oludhe. The richness of the data in terms of answering the researcher's core questions as outlined in section 1.3 of this thesis guided the choice of *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment*.

The two selected novels covered fifteen per cent of the thirteen novels. This small sample size was not relevant because the research is content-oriented and the two selected novels have adequate statistical power to address the research's questions. It is not also possible to discuss adequately the thirteen novels in a single Masters of Arts research thesis. (Kombo and L'oeil 34).

3.5 Data Collection

Data was collected from both the primary and secondary sources. The primary data was drawn from *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment*. Interpretive or close reading was employed to extract data from the sampled novels.

The two selected novels were read thrice. Then, they were deconstructed in line with the three objectives of this study. These are: the denigrating male image, the literary devices used in denigrating the male image and the social impacts of the denigration of male image on the characters in *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment* respectively. The data collected was tested against the Queer theoretical framework.

Objective one was extracted against the: concepts of non-straightness; categorisation of gender; sexuality, power and marginalisation; and deconstruction. Objective two was mined against the tenet of the role of language in the identity politics while the last objective was deconstructed against the precept of the conservative effects of identity classification. The overarching goal was essentially to turn the literary selected novels into data for analysis.

A critical reading of relevant materials on gender issues served as secondary data. This involved locating of current pertinent publications on gender issues. The preliminary processes of reading involved reviewing the texts. This entailed skimming through research materials especially the introductions and conclusions in order to determine the central claims of the research materials as well as to strategically choose where to focus in line with the research objectives as outlined in section 1.4. The arguments were highlighted that gave purpose, order and meaning to the research objectives as well as the Queer theoretical framework.

The second step necessitated interpretation of reviewed work to give information that was needed to make judgements on the research objectives. This involved assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments to establish the gaps, leaps or different interpretations. It also helped to formulate the researcher's own approach with reference to the research questions.

Lastly, the secondary data was cross-analysed to gain better understanding of the specific research questions. During the cross-analysis, the researcher reflected on how the arguments derived from the secondary data could be used in the thesis to interpret and analyse the primary data. This helped to understand how the male image was represented, explore how the literary devices had been deployed to represent the image of men and determine the social impacts of this representation on the male characters in the selected novels (Orodho and Kombo 20).

3.6 Data Analysis

This study employed textual analysis in the examination of the data collected. The analytical strategy enabled the researcher to analyse the contents of the selected novels in line with the objectives set for the study. Both the categorising and connecting strategies were deployed in the analytical process.

On one hand categorising strategy involved the identification of themes that emerged from the raw data. This entailed placing raw data into logical meaningful categories which formed the preliminary framework for analysis. On the other hand, connecting strategy entailed axial coding. Axial coding necessitated re-examination of the categories identified to determine how they are linked. This helped in building conceptual model and determined whether sufficient data existed to support the *Denigration of the Male Image*.

Once the themes, the categories and patterns were identified, the researcher then determined the adequacy of information and the credibility, usefulness, consistency, and validation of the study objectives. The researcher closely evaluated the usefulness of information in answering the research questions and analysed the themes which helped in assessing the methodological choices. Besides, the theoretical orientations, the richness of the existing literature and the characteristics of the phenomena being studied influenced the themes derived at from the collected data. The materials were tested against the tenets of

Queer Theory. The final configuration of data was presented in ordinary prose (Wayne *et al* 48).

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the methodology used in this study. The research adopted analytic research design as its blue print. Its study population was Marjorie Oludhe's thirteen novels. Purposive sampling was employed to select *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment* from the accessible population. Data was collected from the two selected novels using interpretive reading while critical reading was used to get information from secondary data to bolster the main ideas. The data collected was examined using textual analysis and the final configuration of data was presented in ordinary prose.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE DENIGRATING MALE IMAGE

4.1 Introduction

With a few notable exceptions, men are rarely explicitly mentioned in gender policy documents. Where men do appear, they are generally seen as obstacles to women's development: men must surrender their positions of dominance for women to become empowered. The superiority of women as hardworking, reliable, trustworthy, socially responsible, caring, and cooperative is often asserted: whilst men on the other hand are frequently portrayed as lazy, violent, promiscuous, and irresponsible drunkards. (Clever 1)

The aim of this chapter is to re-vision: a revision of the way we read literature and a revision of the way we perceive men and manly ideals. It is a revision that seeks to analyse traditional but also new alternative models of masculinity. As James D. Reimer puts it in his article "Re-Reading American Literature from a Men's Perspective":

To change men's lives (one needs) more than recognition of the limitations and negative effects of our present ideals of manhood. There also must be a recognition and reinforcement of positive alternatives to traditional masculine behaviours (298).

What are of interest in this chapter are the male characterisations in the projection of female ideology and a transformative gender vision. The selected novels; however, have astonishing infrequency with which such alternative vision of male image occurs as demonstrated in this chapter.

In the main, this thesis examines the construction of masculinity via a look at the denigrated male image representations in *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment*. The focus is on the way stereotypical male image expresses and inscribes a number of vilified conceptions of masculine identity. In brief, the attention is on the Marjorie Oludhe's

manipulation of patriarchy to represent the idealized male image, and pay particular attention on the disparaged male image, rather than on difference per se.

This chapter is subdivided into three sections. The first section deals with the confluence between patriarchy and the stereotypical male image. Within patriarchy, this thesis explores how Marjorie Oludhe utilizes patriarchal ideologies to vilify the male image. It also brings to the front the male image as represented in the two selected novels as universal and unchangeable “referent against which standards are assessed but as problematic gender construct itself” (Kimmel Michael, 10). The second section examines the deconstruction of male image. By the deconstruction of the male image, this thesis interests itself with the *new* presentation of the male image. The last section deals with the politics and the individual character response. The concern of this subtitle is to go into the male image portrayal as the male characters manoeuvre the political spaces.

4.2 The Nexus between Patriarchy and Stereotypical Male Image

Given women’s long awareness and analysis of gender as a cultural and political category, the two selected novels offer some of the most innovative and subversive representations of masculinity and gender relations in contemporary African culture. In making gender visible, feminists through the lens of Marjorie Oludhe have not only questioned cultural concepts of femininity but have stimulated the analysis of male representation as a gendered construction.

Using Thomas Dipiero’s argument on white men in his text *White Men Aren’t*, the principal elements of identification- maleness, femaleness- are impossible ones, since according to the cultural structure that has defined them, “no one could ever be completely male” (4). In other words, the ideal male “is not simply a fiction, but a fiction constructed to prohibit comprehensive identification” (4). Insisting further, Dipiero contends that if nobody

has ever really been completely male, then we have a split between our structures of meaning and our socio-political practices, which implies that “we have a designation of human identity- in this case, black male- that apparently has no real referent in the world in which we live”. “It seems particularly ironic,” Dipiero concludes, “that the standard by which all are made into fictionalised others is itself an impossible and non-existent model” (9).

If the existence of “whiteness” appears, at least, open to questioning, the concept of straightness and skewed deconstruction in feminist literary novels can also be interrogated in a number of ways. Probably, the most radical challenge to the presumed unity and stability of heteronormativity comes from Judith Butler. In her classical *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Butler suggests, for instance, that the “unity” of gender is the effect of a regulatory practice that tries to render gender identity uniform through a compulsory heterosexuality (95). Butler argues against (miss) conceptions of heterosexuality as a coherent model. In this sense, then, Butler coincides with other queer theorists like Carolyn Dishaw in *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities in Pre- and Post-Modern*, who also insists on the inextricability of “the normative” and “the deviant,” claiming that sometimes they even become indistinguishable (68). As Butler concludes in this respect, the ideal of a coherent heterosexuality, which Monique Wittig in *The Straight Mind and other Essays* describes as the norm and standard of the heterosexual matrix, is “an impossible ideal” (122).

It is on the shoulders of Judith Butler; therefore, that this research hangs as it reflects on the gender issues in this thesis. Judith Butler’s work in *Gender Troubles* allows for a liberating consideration of the formulation of gender by foregrounding its socially constructed nature, its historical specificity and by articulating the performative notion of gender. She is appropriating and reinterpreting the doctrine of constituting acts. In this sense, gender is no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather,

it is an identity tenuously constituted in time –an identity, instituted through a stylised repetition of acts. Further, gender is instituted through the stylisation of the body and, hence, must be understood as the humdrum way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self (54). This formulation moves the conception of gender off the ground of a substantial model of identity to one that requires a conception of a constituted social temporality. Significantly, if gender is instituted through acts which are internally discontinuous, then the appearance of substance is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief. If the ground of gender identity is the stylised repetition of acts through time, and not seemingly seamless identity, then the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found in the arbitrary relations between such acts, in the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style.

Judith Butler argues that gender is constructed and independent of sex: “a free floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one” (6). The notion of a strict frame points to the fact that gendered identities are constructed within the heterosexual matrix. But because of the fact that culture and society are in constant flux, also discourses present themselves in the plural, coexisting within temporal frames. The multiple and coexisting identifications produce conflicts, convergences, and innovative dissonances within gender configurations which contest the fixity of masculine and feminine placements. It is this necessity to become chameleon-like that there is need to shift and transform one’s identity in order to adjust to the given discourses that opens up space for subversive confusion which ultimately leads to dissociation with the hegemonic order.

Through the conception of gender acts sketched above, this thesis draws from *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment* to show that what is called male gender identity is hegemonic masculinity. The gender roles in *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment* are informed by the patriarchal discourse that assume that gendered identities are uniform, fixed and totalizing hence fail to account for the myriad of gendered identities. This research argues that *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment* are dominated with male stereotypical images that deny men proper humanity as demonstrated in the subsequent subsections.

4.2.1 Masculinity against Men: The Militarization of Everyday Life

In *The Present Moment*, Mr Wright, the European padre comes as close to death as he “ever came to sinful women” when the gun shots indiscriminately get him (48). The padre is not excused from sexual violence; he like any other man in the secular world sails in the same boat of violence. He dies by the same sword though in a different way. A pattern weaves that presents men into the coarse fabric of violence inexorably. Male characters predominate across the spectrum of violence in both *The Present Moment* and *Coming to Birth* in different scenes. The social context does not play any role in influencing gender performance; male characters behave the same way be it in secular or religious spaces. Marjorie Oludhe eminently equates male characters with violence in the selected novels under study. Such direct and analytical relationship inherently implies that the male characters are undifferentiated and innately violent sexes, who are not open to any possibilities for change. They participate in sexual violence, physical violence, as well as verbal aggression. Patriarchy seemingly is the underbelly of human suffering. Those with all the power -males- must resort to violence when their position of dominance is threatened.

4.2.1.1 The sexual Being: Survival for the Fittest

Marjorie Oludhe stereotypically portrays the male characters as intrinsically sexually violent. Throughout *Coming to Birth*, Martin is captured as glorifying and idolizing

traditional imageries of masculinity and male sexual prowess: penis centred. This construction of Martin's sexual stereotype is prevalent in the novel. He is satirized as being preoccupied with looking for his penis: power. Martin has to prove his sexual power and prowess by planting his *pitiful* seeds into a woman's womb. He is scandalously portrayed as being licentious. Apart from his wife, Martin desperately gets sexually involved with Fatima, Fauzia and later Nancy (34-48). Martin's failure to impregnate any of his women is an attempt to satirize his deformed masculinity. As much as his penis, seemingly, is conspicuously present, he lacks virility. His failure to perform sexually is deliberately brought out to mimic his self-worth, not to mention his reputation. He is derided as genetically inadequate. He literally and metaphorically enters the world of "men without balls"; a space where men are "emasculated; weak and full of emotions." There seems to be a sorry; dismal public soap opera of Martin's relationship with his penis. Martin, who in most other areas of his life makes such fetish of being in control, is mocked as being unable to remain master of his sexual appetites. He is derided to be engrossed with whether his phallic department is adequate.

Moreover, Martin's preoccupation with his penis appears to be based on fear, right enough: not on the Freudian fear of castration but on the Adlerian fear of ridicule. His unbridled success in this sphere of life is contingent upon fulfilling the masculine ideals. He runs the risk of being found defective. More darkly, there is little respite from exposure to the more savage side of Martin's sexuality manifested overwhelmingly in his aggression against women. He is built for quantity while Paulina for quality. There is an element of evolutionary struggle. For Martin, the culture allegedly bolsters a myth of masculinity in which quantity is more highly valued than quality and the conquest of a new woman builds more masculine capital than the continuous conquest of the same woman over the course of seventeen years. Rather than being celebrated as a gift of God given to enhance and enrich life, sex becomes a

source of great pain to men like Martin who are unable to prove their sexual aptitude. It becomes obvious that Martin's life can be captured in what Butler calls the "highly rigid frame that congeals over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being."

Compatibly, Norman Fuller in his article "The Social Construction of Gender Identity among Peruvian males" argues that the model of masculinity stresses the ability to procreate, "something that every man must do in order to be respected as man" (96). In other words, to Martin, having children does not only enhance a man's self-confidence and social prestige, but it is also an indication of manliness. This corroborates the claim by Connell Raewny in *Masculinities* that masculinity is socially constructed because society expects one to behave like a man and not otherwise (42). Using patriarchy; therefore, *Coming to Birth* portrays Martin as clinging and living on this ideal of manhood.

Simon, just like Martin in *Coming to Birth* has an affair with Paulina. His penetrative power is lauded when he finally impregnates Paulina, Martin's wife. Marjorie Oludhe does not allow this relationship to flourish. He gets what he wants and is not interested in cementing the relationship, thus disengages himself from Paulina (68). Simon is brought out as a cheap cheat who gives flimsy excuses for his inability to continue with his amorous affair. Through Simon, men are portrayed as reckless and deceitful. Marjorie Oludhe insinuates that the male characters, like Simon, do not stop at luring unmarried women in their quest for sexual power but thoughtlessly sexually engages with even married women like Paulina without a tinge of guilt and shame. In this depiction, Simon is represented as thoughtless being that can only be compared to an animal. His animalistic appetite for penetrative power has no demarcation. He is stereotyped as savagely oversexed and thus sexually dangerous, and this becomes the central trope in the novels under study. Risk taking becomes a centrepiece of male sexuality. Sex is allegedly about adventure, excitement,

danger, and taking chances and these, become the harbingers of joy. Responsibility seems to be a word that seldom turns up in Simon's sexual discourse. Furthermore, sex in Simon has no emotional circumference, that is, there is limited emotional investment if not.

He was glad, but he told her...that Martha's people would not stand for his taking a second wife and he himself did not want to get into conflict with Martin –after all, no one could blame him for wanting a fertile wife and he might even wish to claim the child. (68)

Simon takes a flight from commitment and responsibility. He retreats from paternal obligation instead of performing his duties conscientiously.

In the *Present Moment*, Mimi thinks that the memsahib will find her feet at Kamiti where white people are more dominant and keep her husband up to the mark. Robert is said to be incorrigible. He has an incident with a female suspect carefully hushed up, a coarse talk in front of the nursing sisters and by now he is vociferous when he strides out to the quarters at night (122). This implies that Robert is not capable of changing: as he was yesterday so is he today and shall be tomorrow. He is inherently promiscuous and there are no possibilities for his identity to go through transformation despite the changing world. This is a major stereotype whose longevity and perseverance seems to override any contradiction. Robert is static, because he has neither creativity nor desire to bring about change. The overly Sexual appetite seems to be intricate and beyond the purview of individual agency. Marjorie Oludhe uses this dogma to emphasise the homogeneity and stagnation of the male characters. Ascribing agency to Robert will give him capacity to act. The centrality of resistance does not entail a return to a past essentialized identity for there is no possibility of such return. Rather it is a continual reconstitution of identity under different circumstances which becomes of import. Robert's image is vilified as he is captured as a character who is always all and about looking for women to prove his penetrative power. The portraiture of Robert as always

omnipresent seems to suggest that his huge sexual appetite is infectious and always idling around. He is endeavour on the destructive path without anything constructive to do; he leads a hopeless life.

The above-mentioned idea of fixity of male image is further reinforced by Mama Chungu who is glad that Robert's children had not lived. She purports that she would never have been able to trust them (126). Buchi Emecheta's *Joys of Motherhood* re-affirms Mama Chungu's fears when Nnu Ego suffers for the sake of her children and builds hope around his two sons, Oshia and Adim. Disappointingly, Nnu Ego dies a painful death after being abandoned by his well to do sons living abroad (308). Bodies are not naturally walled off in this way and that seemingly rigid boundaries created in discourse are actually permeable and open to subversion. Gender exists only insofar as it is ritualistically and repetitively performed, creating permanent possibilities for performing gender in new and transgressive ways. A core dynamic of patriarchal sexuality, on this view, is the normalising and sexualizing of male control and dominance over females. This dynamic finds expression in a number of beliefs about what is natural, acceptable, and even desirable in male-female sexual interaction: that the male is persistent and aggressive; that the male is invulnerable, powerful, hard, and commanding; that "real men" are able to get sexual access to women when, where, and how they want it; that sexual intercourse is an act of male conquest; and that men "need" and are entitled to sex.

The numbers of children living in fatherless homes are dramatically on the rise. In *Coming to Birth*, Joyce, Nancy, Johnny, Okeyo are among the many children born out of the sexual binge (70). In *The Present Moment*, Nekesa and her siblings are shoved off by their father while Mimi's two sons lacked a father figure in their short lived lives. Waitito is sired by a priest gone haywire (115). Marjorie Oludhe is laughing at the male characters' foolhardiness when they wholesomely implement the biblical command of "go ye and

multiply.” Portraying men as actors on stage playing out prescribed parts is not the loci of potential change. Manhood is captured as transcendent tangible property that each man must manifest in the world. The male characters are pictured as a gender category that yearns to perform and validate their masculinity through ‘conquering the universe’. Fatherhood is associated with manhood. When one is a ‘man’ one is expected to be able to take on the fatherhood role. There exists a stereotype that men are not interested in partaking fatherly responsibilities and that they are naturally ill-suited for parenting. From the above argument, fatherhood is implicated to be a cause of gender inequality. The rise in the number of street children and single mothers suggests not merely that men are inadequate as partners and fathers but they are simply redundant. Women seem to provide men with sexual validation, and men compete with each other for this.

Using Darwinian Theory of Naturalism, men are perceived to be engaged in the survival for the fittest warfare. They are out to implant their seeds so that out of the children born to them, the fit individuals are likely to pass on their traits to the next generation while the inferior members are likely to gradually die out. Men have also to prove that they are the superior members of the species who can compete favourably in the wild. This undercurrent of unhealthy sexuality that permeates the novels under study characterizes men as creatures living by survival instincts in a cruel world. Men are depicted to be engrossed in primitive emotions which negate human reason. Their energetic aura is used to sexually exploit women. If there is a shift of this understanding, there will be leaps and bounds in being in the correct ideological mind frame to shift and balance things as they are desperately needed for future generations who seek to benefit. Even when a man lives in the home, there is no guarantee of effective fathering. This kind of portraiture inhibits the alternative forms of fatherhood from emerging. The paternal neglect makes children have diminished sense of moral value, and often turn to some form of substance abuse in an attempt to quench their

inner psychic turmoil. In *Coming to Birth*, Che confesses that life was manageable when his mother was alive as he could go to school and was assured of a meal but his schooling is ended after her death as his father needed all his money to get another woman to look after them. His younger sister is reduced to a babysitter and Che is forced out of the house into the street (136). Men are accused of failing in the care giving and upbringing of children.

The impassive stereotypical male image deluges *The Present Moment* and *Coming to Birth*. Marjorie Oludhe uses sarcastic tones in her descriptions of the sexual innuendoes. In *Coming to Birth*, Rachel says that her husband is a driver and she alleges that the only time she has freedom is when he is on long distance safari. Rachel claims that her husband expects her to be indoors since he has odd hours. She confesses that she is expected to wait for him with a pot of food on the go (8). Using Susan Brownmiller's allegations in her text *Against our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* that all men are rapists in their heterosexual relationships with women (75), the above description seems to represent Rachel's husband as a rapist with a monster's craving. His huge enthusiasm for the penetrative moment is enhanced with the image of the pot of food that is eaten simultaneously with the ravishing of his wife. The sexual appetite is spoken of in terms of hunger. There is interplay between sex and hunger which is used to define relationships. The portrayal of emotional or psychological hunger works so that the relationship of a character with food takes on some of the hidden fears and anxieties of the characters being. The moment of desire takes precedence over the physical.

Moreover, the image of food thus serves to qualify the private relationship between husband and wife. The importance of the space of food exchange between a wife and the husband mediate or inform politics of gender: master-servant relationships. The only moment for Rachel's freedom is when her husband is out of sight. This simply refers to women's inability to distinguish between sexual transaction and violence as well as their ignorance of their sexual powers. Heterosexual relationship is captured as imprisoning and if this is so then

Marjorie Oludhe just like other radical feminists reminiscent of Andrea Dworkin looks at the family structure as unsatisfying and sex as imprisoning. This thesis argues that when women and men celebrate the beauty and the power of the phallus in ways that do not uphold male domination then, our erotic lives are enhanced. In a context of mutual sexual pleasure rooted in equality of desire, there is room for politics of sexuality that is varied. But without this progressive sexual context, we end up always creating a world where penis is synonymous with negativity and threat. This calls for a need to create a libratory sexual frontier, places, where the penis is precious and can be cherished. Literature should therefore develop an account of the sexual drive that traverses the mental and the physical, and undergoes idiosyncratic vicissitudes rather than assuming a uniform anatomical or social shape. The sexual encounter cannot perform its function when it is viewed as a trivial event of moral indifference with no purpose or meaning other than producing a physical sensation through the friction of bodily parts.

The inexpressive nature of men reverberates further in *Coming to Birth* in the sexual rendezvous between Paulina and Martin. Marjorie Oludhe says that “Martin was in a hurry to get her to bed and she lay bilious and sweating in his arms but did not get to sleep long after he was snoring” (9). Just like Rachel’s husband, Martin is revealed as being detached. Marjorie is sardonic about this sexual relationship; it lacks romance. Martin is represented as self-seeking. He appears to seek sex as a form of asserting his manhood and virility than as a form of achieving reciprocal pleasure and intimacy. Marianne Hester in her text *Lewd Women and Wicked Witches*, a study of the dynamics of male domination resonates with Marjorie Oludhe that women in marriage suffer from eroticised violence (44). Martin is allegedly in a hurry to satisfy his sexual appetite without having compassion for Paulina who allegedly has discomfort (5). He is cynically depicted as snoring immediately after his power is felt by Paulina. The alleged rape results into miscarriage. This seems to be in line with Andrea

Dworkin's argument in her text *Intercourse* in which she alleges that intercourse or penetration as the invasion of one passive (female) object by an active (male) subject as the root cause of sexual violence (19). This forms the premise of this argument: men are sexually violent. Marjorie Oludhe's depiction of men is no less confusing: even the most loving and gentle husband, father, and son are a beneficiary of the rape of women they love. No ideology that makes such accusations against men as a class can heal any wounds. It can only provoke hostility in return. The rape can also be viewed in terms of Martin curtailing Paulina's quest for freedom. The discomfort that Paulina experiences before the miscarriage refers to the various hurdles and pains that women like Paulina go through in their journeys to freedom. Their hopes for empowerment and emancipation are ultimately thwarted by men's brute personalities which are displayed in Paulina's miscarriages.

In *The Present Moment*, Robert is similarly represented as cold. Robert's blank personality is captured when he loses his two children untouched and unshaken. Mrs Reinhold alleges that his brother-in-law (Robert) is such a cold drinker. She remembers Mama Chungu holding in her arms a sickly fair haired baby with Robert's bony forehead and chin. Reinhold claims that her husband and she had to beg Robert to take the child to hospital or fetch a doctor. But by the time he is persuaded, at nightfall, it is too late. Robert "comforts" Mama Chungu not to take the death of the baby at heart as it won't take her long to get another (90). The concept of fatherhood is being questioned here. Robert is captured as inhuman with no shade of emotions in him. He is purportedly cruel and heartless. As a father, Robert is brought out as a parent with an animal heart that no one can fathom. He does not have feelings even for those with whom he has flesh and blood relationship. He allegedly sits back and watches his child die without making an effort to save his life. This is the highest height of cruelty that men are clothed with. *Coldheartedly*, he supposedly comforts Mimi not to take her son's death at heart as she will have another soon. It is the power of the phallus

that is allegedly of import to him. He, presumably, is not capable of parenting and loving and his heart seems to be covered with soot that devoid him of feelings. Marjorie Oludhe portrays Robert as one who lacks attachment to his children. Robert is bashed and his importance is de-emphasized. The most banal of images takes the centre stage.

A central element of rape as a terrorist institution is a protection racket. Simon in *Coming to Birth* supposedly urges Paulina to stay with *them* after failing to find a lift home. Paulina accepts the offer after ineffectually trying so hard to get help from several drivers. She is afraid of the evening dark that is slowly engulfing Kisumu because of the presence of “rogues.” Simon lies that Martha, his wife, has taken the children to a film at the centre and would be back in half an hour. He purportedly takes advantage of the situation and has sex with Paulina (54). The masculine body as a compartment that is marked by dominance is interpreted as that of a rapist. Marjorie Oludhe seems to suggest that rape is not committed by psychopaths or deviants from our social norms but *exemplars* of our social norms. Rape is no excess, no aberration, no accident, no mistake but it embodies sexuality as the culture prescribes it. This kind of trajectory implies that Simon is perceived as a sexual athlete. This myth views sex as a sport that involves scorekeeping and conquest and is oriented towards performance and reward. Simon becomes a sexual warrior who is supposed to conquer and possess as many women as possible as a proof of his potency. It is sexuality built around accumulating partners (scoring), emotional distancing, and risk taking. Simon is presumed to be ever ready for sex, constantly seeking sex, and constantly seeking to escalate every encounter so that intercourse results. The emotional distancing of the sturdy oak is considered necessary for adequate male sexual functioning. The protection services that Simon offers to Paulina must be bodily paid for: nothing he does is for free. It is supposedly so ritualistically fashionable for him to consume Paulina’s body in the pretext of providing protection.

It is in this same vein that Claudia Card in “Rape as a Terrorist Institution,” in *Violence, Terrorism, and Justice* claims that men as a group both creating the danger and proposing to deliver women from it, dole out protection –sometimes temporary, sometimes permanent, and often illusory- in exchange for women’s service, loyalty, and compliance. In this system, “good” men like Simon protect virtuous and deserving women like Paulina from “bad” men, and part of what defines a woman as deserving protection is her conformity to rules of patriarchal femininity. It is no wonder that Paulina does not resist but assent. Furthermore, as Claudia Card points out, the rules of the institution often grant “protectors” – whether husbands, boyfriends, or pimps- sexual access to the woman or women whom they protect, so that nothing they do to those women is taken to count as rape (18). Recognising the ways in which broad patterns of male power systematically compromise women’s bodily and sexual freedom, and challenging the equation of female submission with meaningful consent, Marjorie Oludhe tends to see a kind of continuum (rather than a bright dividing line) between rape and much “normal” heterosexual activity. The presumption is that a woman’s relationships to the man in question either functions as stand-ins for consent or renders her consent irrelevant or unnecessary.

Correspondingly, Mary Daly in *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women’s Liberation* agrees with Claudia Card and Marjorie Oludhe and puts forward their ideas further. She argues that it “would be a mistake to think that rape is reducible to the physical act of a few men who are rapists” since there are countless “armchair” rapists who vicariously enjoy the act, and in addition -since rape instils in a woman the need for protection- all men have their powers enhanced by rape. Rape, therefore, is a “way of life” and the “most Unholy Trinity of Rape, Genocide, and War is a logical expression of phallogocentric power” (52). From this discussion, rape is summarily perceived as an expression of Simon’s power against Paulina. The argument here is that rape is not reducible

to but is inextricable from heterosexism. The keystone of the above argument is that women suffer from eroticised violence. The penis itself becomes a tool, a symbol. Its strongest manifestation and use is as a weapon. The phallus can conquer, penetrate, dominate, and rape. Intercourse is therefore a violent act in and of itself. This argument begs the question whether there is a feminist way of transforming the act, ridding it of its cultural baggage and what happens to men whose experiences do not comport with this analysis. “The one size fits all” policy driven by a simplistic notion that intimate violence, is a recapitulation of class war, does not deal with this serious problem or represent the variety of sexual violence patterns. Intimate violence is not specific to men and cannot be explained on the basis of gender or gender roles. At some point, one has to ask whether Marjorie Oludhe is more interested in diminishing violence within a population or promoting a political ideology. If she is interested in diminishing violence, it should be diminished for all members of a population. Having looked at the ascription of power from the feministic points of view, the argument is that it is possible to move beyond attempts to tie down power relations in penetrative acts as unsatisfactory, and to propose in their place a different object of power: discourse.

The aforesaid argument is reinforced by Alphonso Lingis in “TePito O TeHenua” who insists that:

Power is not a commodity or a good; it is an active relationship. A power-coupling is a succession of dissymmetry in which each party goes through a succession of changes of emotion, in which each party forms a succession of different senses of self, and a succession of different identities. (156)

Power is relational; it is shifting. For Lingis, power may shift. In this formulation, it becomes apparent that there might be several different (and quite correct) interpretations of the distribution of power in a single penetrative act, at any one time. It is erroneous to portray

Simon in *Coming to Birth* as one who takes advantage of the protection racket to have a feel of his sexual power since Paulina consents to it. Furthermore, she says that she is a married woman who is denied the married woman's right hence the tradition gives her the rights to find sexual satisfaction outside her marriage (54). To insist that a given penetrative act in fact means one particular distribution of power ties down the notions of power in ways that are unattractive. The glaring failure to explain why constructions of sexuality change over time tends only to confirm revolutionary feminism's inability or unwillingness to grapple with history. This explains why Marjorie Oludhe intensely uses the ideology of double standard in which males feel morally and physically edified by multiple sexual encounters while women are held morally and physically tarnished by the same.

The male gaze becomes a denigrating platform in Marjorie Oludhe's *The Present Moment*. The college student gives Mary "an exploratory look in her direction. She almost stops, then lowers her eyes and tries to even her pace; After all, she had seen medical students before" (9). The male gaze that is turned towards Mary can be interpreted as a mirror to reassure the college student of his competence, attractiveness, and confidence. This supposedly represents his narcissism, as well as his insecurity. He probably uses the woman as his mirror. However, this is not the case in *The Present Moment*. The college student is accused through this gaze as being involved in sexual rape through his eyes. Mary says "everybody warns you about them" (9). The college student must labour to reaffirm his masculinity. The gaze turns towards the nurse's body. It becomes a text meant for sexual desire. Images of women permeate society; part of being male, according to the grapevine involves consuming female images, in a pedagogic ritual of consumer culture that generally reaffirms the heterosexual imperative in which attractive, readily available women serve as sexual, zestful objects of desire. This is a default assumption in contemporary social science. The physical beautification may have several interpretations. The presumption that the

college student is clad to sexually lure women to his trap is misleading. Men's construction of a sense of who they are is accomplished as much through style, clothing, body image, and the right look as is women's. Masculinity is no longer simply an essence or an issue of what you do, it is how you look. The college student strives to be aesthetically pleasing, positioning the male form in spotlight, which was once exclusive to women.

Moreover, Judith Butler in *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in the Twentieth Century France* suggests that "desire is intentional in that it is also always desire *of* or *for* a given object or other, but it is also reflexive in the sense that desire is a modality in which the subject is both discovered and enhanced" (9). Thus desire brings about relationship between object of desire and the desiring subject: "in effect, we read our negativity in the objects and others we desire; as desirable, detestable, solicitous, or rejecting, these emotional facts of the world mirror our ontological insufficiency in Hegelian terms; they show us the negativity that we are, and engage us with the promise of plenitude or the threat of reaffirming our nothingness" (9-10). Using Jacques Derrida's deconstruction theory, then, one single gaze can have a multiple of interpretations. It is utterly wrong, therefore to presume that the college student's gaze is a function of his sexual eroticism. Human embodiment is thus imbued with opaque meaning.

Similarly, Bill Osgerby in a sweeping study of *Playboy* magazine and its effect on male gender roles concludes:

Masculine identity and visual codes premised upon youthful hedonism and conspicuous objectification certainly ruptured and displaced the traditional codes of a bourgeois masculinity rooted in ideals of hard work, thrift, and puritanical conservatism. But, at the same time, they left wider power structures and systems of inequality essentially intact. (203-204)

To the degree that Marjorie Oludhe' animates visual consumption processes; however, a change of its discursive limits disrupts traditional conventions of male gaze and opens new possibilities for male gaze and male image.

The above male sex roles are incapable of describing men's experiences. They are problematic, historically specific, and also unthinkable ideal. They suggest a rigid and false cultural universalism. It is time to bring forth a 'new era man'- the man who breaks with traditional gender roles and assumes a set of domestic tasks and responsibilities. As a socializing agent, it is time feminist literary writers release the 'wild man' inside the civilised man. Men should be provided with a positive image of masculinity, one that combines strength with tenderness. These stereotypes fail to unleash the richness and diversity of different forms of masculinity.

4.2.1.2 The Tarzan Man: The Eroticization of Physical Violence

Martin in *Coming to Birth* is supposedly the prism of violence. Martin is represented as unreasonably violent. Paulina is taken to the hospital and unfortunately miscarries. She is discharged and ejected out of the hospital to give room for other patients. She decides to find her way out and ends up getting lost. Martin beats her up for getting lost and not bothering to wait for him (22). Reason becomes elusive and instead, the "innate aggression" in Martin allegedly takes the better part of him. From the above delineation, Martin is represented as callous and devoid of compassion. His ethical value is eroded when he allegedly beats up Paulina despite the pain she is in. He is scandalously depicted as quick to anger and devoid of reason. He impatiently fails to give Paulina room to explain her whereabouts. He beats her up without taking into account that the mistake is partly his. He never gave Paulina the Nittigrity of where he works and the name of the estate they were homing in. Martin allegedly denigrates Paulina, directing his anger and violence against her because his manhood is under siege. He is insecure. His ascendancy is threatened and this can be construed that he cannot

take care of his wife. His quest for domination is allegedly of more importance than the life of his wife. He would rather let his wife die than confide in his friends that she never came back home. Marriage becomes a space within which a culture of violence breeds, congeals, and becomes an intricate part of the social fabric.

The normalcy of wife beating is amplified in *Coming to Birth*. “She screamed as he came flailing towards her but in Pumwani people were accustomed to screaming” (22). Generalisation of breath-taking crudity and boldness are made about heterosexual relationships. The female characters, allegedly, resign to the physical torture and that explains why no one seems to care about Paulina’s screaming. The female characters, ostensibly, surrender themselves to the complications of home, recognising that love and violence do co-exist in this landscape of heritage. The rationalisation of husband/wife violence reinforces the idea that power resides in the patriarch and that it must be claimed, can only be claimed by the sexually aggressive men like Martin. This implies that the male characters are innately violent and this is a well understood fact.

The identification of patriarchal attitudes towards men with those of the most violent males is resonated with Susan Brownmiller in her book, *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape*. Her discussion is about rape –not only the “police blotter” kind in which criminal attacks and sexually molests a woman but about a society based on rape: the “conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear” (45). Rape is thus not an individual problem. It is a societal problem arising from a “distorted masculine philosophy of aggression” (45). Ahoya further claims that wife beating is customary. She tells Paulina that if she had been married in the old way, her husband would have given her a token beating while the guests were still there (24). The above intimation legitimizes physical violence. Ahoya perceives physical violence as a sign of love that any man must be able to perform. Marjorie Oludhe’s values found in *Coming to Birth* believe that domestic violence

springs from a society that silently applauds male violence against women. Marjorie Oludhe seems to be so convinced that discussion is brushed aside regarding the instinctive cry “women and children first” when disaster strikes, for example, the Titanic. Male violence is not ‘contextualised’. Instead, it is attributed to a broader more evil social agenda; men emit an aura of aggression and violence.

Consistently, Kate Millet in *Sexual Politics* argues that men are often identified with the lowest class of men and most violent class of males is seen as the agent of all males (23). She argues that we live in a rapist society and Kate Millet sees all men as overtly or covertly aggressive and sadistic against women. As a result Marjorie Oludhe tends to generalize greatly about violent men, about men in general and ignore the impact of female pathology. Morris Green in *Fathers after Divorce* argues that women often engage in physical and verbal assaults. They frequently engage in endless shouting, calling names, insulting which paralyse the men’s ego and their defence system to the breaking point. On the physical side of the problem, Morris Greens claims most reports of husbands being kicked, scratched and punched or having their hands and arms being bitten while trying to protect themselves, throwing or making direct contact with weapons such as knives, bottles, plates, ash trays, hot irons, and hot liquids are common (19). However, Marjorie Oludhe chooses to brush all these aside and to wholesomely point accusing fingers at male characters as the violent gender. Feminism does not adequately discuss why men should be held individually responsible when ‘patriarchy’ is to blame. It fails to explain the differences in attitudes that are the rejection or acceptance towards violence in the male population as a whole. The same silence falls when poor treatment of men arises. It is never seen as oppression of the same patriarchy. The vague but catch-all attack fails to examine the context.

Similarly, in Margaret Ogola’s *The River and the Source*, Otieno, Akoko’s brother in law, seems to be in agreement with Ahoya in *Coming to Birth* as far as wife beating is

concerned. Otieno decides against disciplining his sister-in-law since he is afraid of his brother who has added scandal to all his other sins by failing to ever lay a finger on his wife (37). From this argument, the male image is highly satirized. There is competition for dominance from the above intimation. Violence is a “virtue” in men and those who fail to exhibit that commit the greatest abomination. Violence becomes the ultimate triumph of manhood. In the same similitude, Kenneth Corvo and Pamela Johnson, in “Vilification of the “barterer”: How Blame Shapes Domestic Violence Policy and Interventions. *Aggression and Violent Behaviour* outlines the bedrock view of feminist thought that battering (by males) is never provoked, hereditary, out of control, accidental, and an isolated incident. It is not caused by disease, diminished intellect, alcoholism, mental illness or any external person or event. It is a means for men to systematically dominate, disempower, control, and devalue women. It is greater than an individual act; it supports the larger goal of oppression of women (7). This is solecism, the representativeness heuristic that people hold incorrect personal notions, based on salient personal experiences that underestimate selective bias, baseline incidence of characteristics, and lead to erroneous social judgement. Marjorie Oludhe continues to stereotype men despite the heterogeneity of male attitudes to women, violence use, and marital power.

The physical violence of Martin is further derisively espoused in *Coming to Birth*. Martin’s brutality is disdained. He allegedly beats up Paulina when she miscarries for the second time. He scolds her for imagining things (32). Wife beating is synonymous with Martin’s life. It is triggered by very simplistic issues. Martin is described as a cruel savage whose enormous appetite for violence precludes reason. The normalcy of this deviant behaviour makes Martin to be perceived as feeding and breeding on violence. It becomes his idiosyncrasy and happenstance of everyday life. Culture is dynamic, and individuals are socialised differently hence the possibilities for multiplicity of performance is inevitable. The

physical violence in men resonates with Marjorie Oludhe's authorial intrusion in *Coming to Birth* when she comments that "men's work was so often destructive –clearing spaces, breaking things down to pulp, making decisions which often did not amount to anything tangible" (130). Marjorie Oludhe uses brutality and the assault on women as an indication of the emotionless, cold, and calculating nature of men in fear of losing their power over women. Domestic violence is a jabberwocky issue which Marjorie Oludhe boils down- via theory of patriarchy- into simplistic 'man evil, woman victim' paradigm. Family violence, relationship violence- whatever we want to call it- is far more abstract. Drug abuse, alcohol abuse, mental illness, poverty, unemployment, and a range of social factors make domestic violence a social issue not a gender issue. Marjorie Oludhe's mantra declares violence as a male culture which is valorised as signs of masculinity, male authority, power, and control. The gendered lens that Marjorie Oludhe uses to illustrate behind closed doors violence is a telephoto lens not a wide-angle lens. She does not draw out the complex nature of family violence. In so doing Marjorie Oludhe trivialises injuries to males and conjures up monolithic but misleading view of complex social problem that is subsequently presented in a slanted manner. Marjorie Oludhe captures intimate violence as the by-product of patriarchy and hence, an exclusively male activity. This is a type of error in social judgement. This research's point of view is conflating men together in a uniform category is problematic as race, ethnicity, class and sexuality crisscross the landscape of masculinity.

In the *Present Moment*, Florence's husband becomes a drunk after taking her to Nairobi. The husband allegedly repeatedly beats her up in spite of the fact that she is expectant with their third child until she succumbs to injuries. It becomes too late to save neither the baby nor her (43). Marjorie Oludhe resonates with Andrea Dworkin's assertion in her book *Intercourse* that men love murder; in art they celebrate it and in life they commit it (26). Marriage appears to be on its death bed with men turned barterers and murderers.

She stayed with that man and got a second baby. Then he took them to Nairobi, and she waited a long time but at last started a third. By now her man was drinking badly, and he beat her and beat her until she died; neighbours took her to hospital, but it was too late to save her or the baby. (Oludhe 43)

Florence's husband is represented as a savage whose consciousness is impaired. He supposedly does not care a bit about the fragile state of his wife and frequently beats her up till she succumbs to injuries. The brute illustration of his manhood is foregrounded. Violence becomes a self-defining tool.

In *The Present Moment*, Rahel's husband, a soldier, comes back from war, and the only thing he allegedly prides in is the big scar on his left thigh which he shows to his son, Vitalis. He tells him that that is the best present one can ever have (12). Military eroticism seems to complement sexual eroticism in the literary novels under study. Just like sexual violence, militarism is supposedly an invitation to manliness. This observation resonates with Nancy Hartsock who argues in her book *Money, Sex, and Power: Toward a Feminist Historical Materialism* that military power has an erotic component; she points particularly to a masculine eroticism embedded in notions of military strength and valour. War, to her, is an invitation to manliness (34). Participation in war is, purportedly, the allure of adventure, the promise of masculine camaraderie, the opportunity to test and prove oneself, the chance to participate in a historic, larger than life, generation defining event. Given this stick and carrots, attraction of war becomes irresistible.

However, in *The Present Moment*, men's adventure in war is mimicked as their masculine eroticism go through deformation. Rahel's husband, just like any other man, joins the military to prove his self-worth. The presentation of his military potency and gallantry is highly criticized. Instead of experiencing the erotic component he so desires, his military deformity takes the centre stage. He is depicted as cowardly. He hides behind the wound

inflicted on him as his saviour. The wound guarantees him a sanctuary as he doesn't get into direct contact with war. The scar, to his wives, becomes a wound as it reminds him of his defeat hence deformed masculinity. He wishes not to talk about it and becomes infuriated at the mere mentioning of it by his women. This may be construed to mean that he is ashamed of his challenged masculinity. He is ridiculed as hiding his disputed dominance in anger. Marjorie Oludhe presentation of Rahel's husband is a mockery to men's valour and vigour. They are captured as weaklings who only live in the world of utopia. They allegedly harbour wishful thinking and fail to prove their self-value. When the opportune moment comes for Rahel's husband to prove his manliness, he does not grasp it. The fury is supposedly a defence mechanism for his deformed masculinity.

Moreover, Vitalis, just like his father, joins the army with mad passion to follow his father's footsteps at the age of eighteen when his father dies. Rahel says that that was probably the best thing he could do. It is the only kind of work that he knows about and Vitalis is not all that good at school to look for an office work (38). Vitalis foolishly desires to prove his potency, just like his father. He misconstrues the scar to signify bravery. Bravery for him is a quality so undeniably and inextricably linked to masculinity. Victor's strong desire to engage in military war may be viewed as an attempt to reinforce his supposedly inherently violent nature. The allure to this sort of adventure is an admonishment for his love for death and murder. Andrea Dworkin, for example, in her book *Intercourse* writes that all men are violent: "men love death...men especially love murder. In art they celebrate it, and in life they commit it" (130). War, therefore, purportedly provides an amphitheatre to commit murder. It is alleged that he does not benefit any other job except the military one. He is only apprenticed in war and that seemingly is the only kind of work that Rahel knows men to be good at. Murdering is their passion; death is the ultimate triumph of their manhood. If this

were so, then the world would be turned into a slaughter house with no breathing soul in it. This argument depicts men as savages.

A type of solidarity amongst men is caricatured in *The Present Moment*. Marjorie Oludhe harangues that men will do anything to protect their dominance. They are infantilized and are quick to anger. Violence is meted on Nekesa unjustly. She alleges that a policeman harasses her as she is selling her wares. He gets infuriated when Nekesa tells him that she is not married because she is too fussy. This, Nekesa alleges, earns her a flying kick, destroying her merchandise, and several arms and batons. She loses her trade and ends up hospitalised with cracked ribs and a broken arm (136-137). The policeman is portrayed as irrational in the punishment he gives Nekesa. The policeman, supposedly, gets infuriated by Nekesa's failure to be married since she is hard to please and the allegation she makes against the father. He is allegedly doing his duty to the *nation* (men).

Moreover, the policeman is depicted as delinquent. He sardonically hammers down Nekesa breaking her arm; cracking her ribs and strewing her merchandise along the street, damaged. This kind of portrayal cripples him. The ingredient of masculinity as tapped above requires a self-destructive identity, a deeply masochistic self-denial, shrinkage of the self and a turning away from whole areas of life. The policeman's behaviour suggests that he is controlling and possessive individual who believes that a woman is a man's property, born at his feet to serve him, and should; therefore, be subdued and objectified. This is an illustration of hegemonic masculinity, a socially constructed concept that holds an authoritative positioning over women. Such portraiture makes the policeman half human. Men's solidarity comes at the cost of women's lives, and the rationales for inciting such violence are based on irrational anxieties about feminine power.

4.2.1.3 Verbal Aggression: A Precursor to Physical Violence

Apart from physical and sexual violence, verbal aggression is also exhibited in the selected novels under study. In *Coming to Birth*, Martin insults Paulina calling her slut, whore (22) when she gets lost from the hospital and spends two nights out. Martin's failure to "protect" his wife from imaginary rogues or bad men makes him resort to verbal abuse; he allegedly covers up his inadequacy as a protector as his manhood is threatened. This can be deduced to mean he is proud. Verbal aggression becomes the prerequisite for physical violence. Marjorie Oludhe portrays men like Martin as having the tendency to resort to verbal violence whenever their dominance is threatened which usually precedes the physical violence. Everything is viewed within the confines of patriarchy. Martin is presented as an egoistic person who prefers having a corpse in his hands to telling the world that his wife is lost. Martin supposedly turns sweet home into a space that ruptures Paulina's body, mind, and family. He grovels towards seemingly superior power while crushing those under his authority. He is depicted as extremely high handed and vindictive toward Paulina. Living up to the patriarchal ideals of masculinity is derisively captured to be of more import than life itself. Paulina spending two nights out, to him, may be construed to mean that he fails in his duty as a husband. He purportedly cannot sit back and watch lest he is reduced to a laughing stock. It then becomes his duty to discipline Paulina without caring about her fragile shaken self. Reason and tenderness are presented as elusive in Martin's life. He is numbed of emotions and it is the self that he greedily feeds. He is presented incapable of loving and reasoning. This seems to be the central argument here: he is mean. Martin's verbal aggression is also triggered by Paulina's miscarriage. He says, "Bleeding there maybe. Can't even keep baby for me? Can't even be sure it was mine, can I? - Whore- Bitch! - How did you get here with that white woman?" (22). Martin's threatened manhood supposedly turns him into a monster that does not care about his wife's emotional stability. From this argument, Martin is

viewed as a psychological rapist whose main interest is to feed his wounded ego. He is presented as incapable of standing up for his partner in her hour of need. Conversely, he adds salt to the already wounded soul; he makes his spouse to feel guilty for every unfortunate occurrence that bombards her life.

In *Coming to Birth*, Marjorie Oludhe presents men as being inept in managing their own stresses and frustrations in life. Martin is allegedly scolded for being late and cautioned for being untidy and making several miscalculations. As a consequence for all these, he projects his anger to his sick and already frightened wife. He is charged for failing to be reasonable enough to realise that his wife could not fetch water nor charcoal as the door was padlocked (22). Martin's ham-fisted effort to work out on his emotional turmoil presents him as infantile; his anger is madness. He is emotionally fragile and explodes beyond proportions when confronted with challenges of life. Paulina purportedly becomes her punching bag when depressed. As a child, he is not ready to take in criticisms positively. Consequently, he looks for outlets to vent out his anger.

Lying in bed till now?" he roared. "And no food ready!"

"There is no water and no charcoal," she replied meekly.

"No... You employ me as a bloody coolie to bring you water?" he shouted. "Don't you know where the water is?"

"But you had the key, Martin. I couldn't get out."

"Carry my own key, fetch my own water, cook my own food! What the devil am I married for? (Oludhe 25)

This sort of presentation depicts Martin as immature and emotional; as incapable of resolving his inner conflicts. Martin is reviled as engaging in unreasonable and unprovoked verbal exchange. He is alleged to attack Paulina's feelings and emotions, and the 'soft spots' that

affect her moods, self-esteem, and confidence. He resorts to verbal abuse in order not only to subdue his wife, but also to maintain his masculine identity. Paulina endures both his violence, crude, and inhuman denunciation. In other words Martin is portrayed as sadist.

In the *Present Moment*, the dominance of men seems to be a revered position. Florence's husband who is a gardener and grounds man is financially incapacitated; he is not in a position to pay dowry according to the Luo customs to Florence's people (45). He is, consequently captured as a mental rapist allegedly for the purpose of covering up his inadequacy. He supposedly makes Rahel feel that her daughter is not good enough and is only doing her a favour by marrying her. This power is scathingly anchored on nothingness. It is caricatured as a mere delusion of supremacy. Compatibly, Raymond Chandler in his text *The Little Sisters* says,

They just sat there and looked back at me. They had the calm weathered faces of healthy men in hard condition. They had the eyes they always have, cloudy and grey like freezing water. The firm set mouth, the hard little wrinkles at the corners of the eyes, the hard hollow meaningless stare, not quite cruel and a thousand miles from kind. The dull ready-made clothes, worn without style with a sort of contempt; the look of men who are poor and yet proud of their power, watching always for ways to make it felt (55).

Florence's husband; therefore, is presented as insufficient. It is out of his inadequacy that he supposedly uses violence as a defence mechanism. This performance depicts Florence's husband as impertinent even toward the elderly. The eminence of a mother-in-law is sufficed to oblige Florence's husband to be deferential which conversely he allegedly does not. Marjorie Oludhe seems to ignore the role that gender relations play in any given social order. Florence's husband is simplistically violent to all and sundry; effeminate men and women, children and the old are his victims.

4.2.2 Beyond God the Father: The Serpentine Apple.

In *The Present Moment*, Waitito's appearance is equated to that of the serpentine apple. He is encircled with a halo of sunlight and clad in his shirt and shorts, his wide brimmed hat and sandals. He is also endowed with the knowledge of the world and other ways and women. He is ironically a spectacle to behold. Marjorie Oludhe strips Waitito off his impeccable status to lay bare the purportedly hidden self. Just like Eve saw how beautiful the tree was and how good its fruit would be to eat so is Wairimu to Waitito. The adventure allegedly does not last long as on the fourth day Waitito disappears. The revelation of the shameful disclosure becomes unbearable and Wairimu runs away as the forest is no longer thick enough to hide divergence (16). He supposedly comes back later and arranges his marriage with Miriam. This can be decoded as an attempt by Marjorie Oludhe to represent Waitito as deceitful and shameless. He is depicted as always having something up his sleeves. In response to feminist criticisms of the effects on women being constructed as "sex objects," Warren Farrel in *The Liberated Man* posits an equally negative effect on men being constructed as "success objects." He claims that women not only become objects of male sex drive but also of a man's need to use women to prove him a man to other men. However, Warren Farrel claims that the more a man has to "produce pussy" the more he moulds himself into the object he thinks will attract the woman. A woman hitherto becomes a sex object as a man becomes a success object (74). This can be deciphered to mean that Waitito is vilified as treacherous. As success object, he camouflages in a bid to get his prey. It is purported that beneath his meticulous outfit lays the evil beast ready to consume and destroy. He is comparable to the wolf in the sheep's cloth. He is captured as a schemer and calculating who is out to commit sex murder. The central argument here is the deceptive and ingenuity nature of heterosexual relationships. He is scandalously depicted as an idler whose main preoccupation is hunting women's bodies to prove his self-worth. Waitito as a success object

is criticised for his ulterior motive which he disguises to satisfy his selfish whims. In this appearance he is featured as a personality not to be trusted; association with him only results in pain. He only adorns himself to attract his prey.

The above argument is underscored by Rosemary Ricciardelli, Kimberley Clow and Phillip White in the article “Investigating Hegemonic Masculinity in Men’s Lifestyle Magazine.” They argue that the cultural turbulence that arises from shifts in gender order leads to the emergence of a new form of masculinity. It provides a different means through which hegemony can be expressed. It can be read that hegemonic masculinity remains dominant because it is malleable-moulded itself (18). In brief it allegedly remains a big pimple in the women’s back. Besides, Waitito’s foremost mission from this depiction is to have his sexual power felt regardless of the social milieu. Waitito seems not to respect the fact that his fiancée comes from the locale and Wairimu happens to be Miriam’s friend. This kind of portraiture places Waitito on the negative as a character whose sexual appetite is so enormous that he does all it takes to satisfy it regardless of the situations. He behaves the same everywhere and this thesis disputes this fixity of gender role; Gender role is relational and shifting.

Education as a socialisation tool seems not to be strong enough to change the mind frame of men in the selected texts under study. In *The Present Moment*, there is a student doctor who does not appear to be gliding round with his hands full of important papers like the seniors. He just stands by the intersection looking about him, empty-handed, his white coat gleaming as though very new over his expensive-looking shirt and slacks, a striking light brown face, and loose, curly hair. Mary claims that everybody warns you about them and it would be imprudent to let them get you flustered (9). The male identities, according to Marjorie Oludhe are stagnant and presumably defiant of change. They are the same in the past, the present, and the future; they can never grow. Priscilla in *The Present Moment*

comments that it is only through prayers that men can be salvaged. She says, “I hope you pray for him...Even a great sinner can be helped to repent” (73). Change, from this argument cannot be initiated by the self. Men allegedly lack individual agency. They need a supernatural hand for them to transform. Gender is free floating and men just like women are socialised differently hence an array of masculinities is possible in any given social context. Education being an agent of socialisation plays a critical role in attitude and behavioural change.

Correspondingly, in the consumer culture, Mike Featherstone in “The Body in Consumer Culture” *The Body: Social Process and Cultural Theory* explains “uses images, signs, and symbolic goods which summon up dreams, desires, and fantasies which suggest romantic authenticity and emotional fulfilment in narcissistically pleasing oneself, instead of others” (19). The body of the student doctor becomes a socio-cultural construct- a medium of self-expression open to investment and consumption. Marjorie Oludhe presents an idealised appearance associated with hegemonic masculinity. Her foregrounding of physical appearance is due to the advantages understood to accrue to attractive people. Human beings are caricatured as goodies and baddies. Mary says that the student doctor was there when she came back and is not surprised when he appeared there later in the day (8). He is presented as lazing around in his expensive garb to become a success object. This purportedly explains education’s incapability to transform men. The student doctor is accused of not taking his education seriously as most of the time is spent hunting for women. The student doctor unrealistically is glued strategically at one given spot presumably throughout the day. This portrays him as a juvenile. It is only juvenile delinquents who can elicit this kind of fixation. It is quite hyperbolic that the student doctor in his sexual bender has this kind of energy and determination to be fixated in a given setting in a bid to get the attention of women. The

immobility of the student doctor is tantamount to his fixity in gender relations. He is incapable of going through transformation.

In *Coming to Birth*, Simon who is a clerk at the health department is always everywhere; nothing seems to keep him to his desk. He is courteous and tidy, the sort of a man who always wears a jacket even in the hottest weather. He is there at every turn in Kisumu. He always seems to be in front of the Town Hall rather than in his own office, or at the station or at the Victoria Social Hall. After duty, he would be found at the bus stand (53). This portrayal can be read as an attempt to draw Simon as destructive both economically and socially. Simon is engrossed in his physical appearance that even hot weather does not prevent him from being in his jacket. It is within this context that Victor Blum in his text *Flesh Wounds: The Culture of Cosmetic Surgery* proposes that “there is an expectation in our culture that the better you look the more access to love and happiness you’ll have” (27). This allegedly plays a key role in shaping perceptions of masculinity, appearance, and identification which are largely intertwined. Serving the nation is secondary to Simon, what is important is his sexual appetite. He is a hunter looking for women bodies to devour that little time is allegedly spent doing constructive work in his office. Physical attractiveness in him becomes his idiosyncrasy for purpose of sexual entrapment. Social relations and context is set aside in the depiction of men by Marjorie Oludhe.

The aforesaid is underscored by Raewyn Connell and James Messerschmidt in “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept” *Gender and Society* who argue that hegemony embodies the currently honoured way of being a man; it requires all other men to position themselves in relation to it (5). Physical attractiveness in Simon; therefore, is as a result of how identity formation is largely influenced by his physical appearance. It is the exterior territories or surfaces of his body that symbolise his self. Simon’s body is viewed as

a project where his appearance is linked to the construction and maintenance of his self-image.

Good looks and good tastes are now also part of male attractiveness; a new standard from which men had hitherto been relatively exempt. Their identity commoditised. So, although limits extend, and the physical attractiveness expands, gender relations remain oppositional. Manhood is not the manifestation of an inner essence; it is socially constructed and created in culture, and consequently means different things at different times to different people. This gives men the agency; the capacity to act. Our behaviours are not simply “just human nature” because “boys will be boys.” From the materials we find around us in our culture- other people, ideas, and objects- we actively create our world, our identities. One must take cognisance of variable of age, place etc. Men both individually and collectively, can change. Ideas of masculinity not only change over time, they may change during the course of one’s lifetime. The argument here is that bodily appearance is socially constructed through interactions. Therefore, how one carries oneself, dresses, and looks has implications for identity because in interacting with others, bodily presentation determines the self-constructed. The socializing ‘messages’ emanate from parents, teachers, peers, the media, organizations like churches, and constitute a series of scripts or guidelines, by which men live their lives. These guidelines give off contradictory messages on dressing codes or bodily appearances.

4.3 Coming to Birth in the Present Moment: The New Wine in the Old Wine Skin

Gender performance in *Coming to Birth* is captured as a double edged sword. Seemingly, it’s time for women to give men hell. The verbal aggression which was initially men’s arsenal has become women’s battery to silence men. “She even overcame her usual reticence to the point of shouting at Martin when he sat down to eat...perhaps his public emotions had been used up while hers were conserved” (110). Paulina howled at Martin, “We

must do something” (110). Martin is presented as an emotional dummy. It appears that he is no longer active in the political space and has nothing to offer in Paulina’s quest for political growth. The masculine voice is now muted- Martin becomes passive, tamed, domesticated animal. His Zeus power diminished. Giving up the patriarchal dividend does not have to place Martin in a state of passivity. When Paulina first came to Nairobi, Martin was there in handy to furnish her with the political developments both in Kenya and neighbouring countries (110). His dominance is eroded hence incapacitated. He does not reiterate when Paulina attacks him verbally but sits numbed. Paradoxically, Feminism encourages women to man up and compete with men, whilst men are encouraged to get in touch with their feminine side. Women are encouraged to become more militant and assertive and on the other side attacks men for showing masculine traits. Marjorie Oludhe not only deconstructs the gender roles here but reduces the importance of maleness through her codification of the male figures under the control of women.

On the contrary, Post-colonial studies, in Leela Gandhi’s words, do not seek to marginalise the west. Their manifestos are to modify their mode of address and learn to speak more adequately to the world which they do speak for. And in turn, that they acquire the capacity to facilitate a democratic colloquium between antagonistic inheritors of the colonial aftermath (4). Feminists’ literary works should not be motivated by a spirit of revenge towards the colonial (men). There should be a will to go beyond certain binaries that characterised the colonial situation and the world that emerged in its wake, namely colonizer/ colonized; black/ white; men/ women; metropolitan/periphery, in the service of a more democratic future for all those who shared the colonial past, albeit differently. Gender reciprocity is the key to gender equity.

The role and purpose of men as the ‘alpha male’, provider, and protector within the family unit and the community is obscured and belittled. Martin in *Coming to Birth* is

captured as a parasite in his new garment having been stripped off his role as a breadwinner. “At first Martin gave her money every two or three days and told her what to buy...”(28), but later “each time he borrowed from her ten shillings which she had put aside from her work money to buy more yarn for crochet” (35). In this presentation, Martin is depicted as exploitative. He allegedly rapes Paulina of her financial gains thwarting her efforts for monetary independence. Apart from being accused of wanting to stamp his dominance, he is captured as being financially dependent on Paulina. He no longer takes up his responsibilities as a breadwinner of his family. “One day when the charcoal man was dunning Martin to pay the bill and he therefore swore at her for sitting idle with no tablecloth in hand” (35) and “then there were textbooks for evening classes and his younger sisters were getting into higher classes at school too. He is disappointed that Paulina has not offered to pay for them. Of course she didn’t need anything from him...” (47). Martin is being mocked here. He is portrayed as a dependent. There is a reversal of role in this presentation. Marjorie Oludhe does not create her actors to financially complement one another but deconstructs the position of male characters thereby turning them into dependents. Operating on the twin assumption that equality means sameness, and that most differences between the sexes are culturally imposed, Marjorie Oludhe undertakes her own cultural imposition. Marjorie Oludhe’s efforts to create an androgynous society in which male and female roles are as identical as possible have resulted into a juggernaut that engulfs us. By almost all indicia of wellbeing, the institution becomes significantly less healthy.

Despite the pro-family motives, Marjorie Oludhe ascribes herself to; she actively seeks the traditional family’s destruction. She adopts Kate Millet’s goal set forth in her *Sexual Politics*, in which she says that “the family, as that term is presently understood, must go; a kind fate,” she remarks, in view of the institution’s history (25). Marjorie Oludhe successfully wages war against the traditional family in which husbands are the principal

breadwinners and wives are primarily homemakers. However, the deconstruction of men's role as breadwinners results in a proliferation of weak and damaged images of men in *Coming to Birth*. Martin no longer provides for his wife nor does he cater for his immediate relatives. He allegedly expects his wife to fend for herself and take up his family's responsibilities which were initially his. The financial superiority of Paulina is heralded as a blue print for future families' progress while that of Martin is long-winded: a smokescreen. The desire for an egalitarian marriage becomes a facade. The egalitarian era as presented in *Coming to Birth* is catastrophic with Martin being pushed out of the centre stage to the periphery. Martin is ripped off the title of breadwinner and instead is reduced to a dependent. This convoluted re-interpretation of history as "milestones to equality" conveniently ignores what the earlier feminists were really fighting for. Marjorie Oludhe, in her creation of financially superior women, creates a society of economically predatory males.

Men's dependence on women is further reinforced through the deconstruction of family structure. Marjorie Oludhe uses her own influence of Christian teachings where in the *Bible* it is written that a man shall leave his parents and join his wife not the African way where a woman leaves her people, to join her husband to deconstruct the family structure. Through this deconstruction, Martin in *Coming to Birth* finally moves into Paulina's house to get a sanctuary after a series of moving in and out of his friends' houses. Glissant Edouard in *Thinking Beyond the Categories: On the diasporisation of Gender* links the idea of deconstruction with the "reconstitution of the body with that of reclaiming or controlling the passage of subjectivity leading to the ultimate liberation of the body" (79). In this case, the body becomes a fundamental part of how the individual negotiates his way through reality. Men in their confrontation of reality are placed in a state of inactivity. Martin is crippled financially despite being employed and married and has to cling into his wife for financial

assistance. Martin is always without money and shares rooms with friends. He is always retrogressing.

In the same grain, Benedict Onyango and Andrian Roscoe in *Keep My Words* in the story “The Noble Woman” deconstruct the role of men as protectors using humiliating images. Opien Wuon Abonyo, when his family is attacked by the ferocious beasts, trembles with fear. He wails, “Oh father of Abonyo, I must die today.” (66). Apiyo, his wife, is calm and fearless. She thrusts up in their arses a red-hot *riw* killing the twelve beasts (67). Abonyo’s role as a defender of his family is denigrated in the new image given to him. He is captured as cowardly in comparison to his wife. Abonyo is portrayed as a loser in the wake of decolonisation. If empowerment means enabling Apiyo to expand her power within in order to have power to make her own choices, then this can equally be applied in work with Abonyo. It is often easier to resist change and remain cushioned by the comfort of familiarity. Behaving differently can raise all kinds of anxieties and threats, especially when identities might be compromised. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon Frantz in his evocation of change says:

Decolonisation never takes place unnoticed, for it influences individuals and modifies them fundamentally. It transforms spectators crushed with their inessentiality into privileged actors, with the grandiose glare of history’s floodlights upon them. It brings a natural rhythm into existence, introduced by new men, and with it a new humanity.

Decolonization is the veritable creation of new men. (36)

By deconstructing cultural assumptions about being a man, awareness can be raised about the ways in which some of these assumptions leave people in a no-win situation. And by working from this analysis to build the confidence to choose to behave differently, men can be offered the means to empower themselves to change. Deconstruction process should help to dismantle both the binaries and the static identity nurtured in feminist texts. The point is that

both the African man and the African woman are complex entities whose consciousness goes beyond the trivial binaries. The millennium thing for happiness, seemingly, is to make men descend from grace to grass as women ascend the social ladder. The equalitarian society cannot be realised by making men to be laughing stocks but by creating a levelled ground in which the gender actors can play a multiplicity of roles.

4.4 Politics and Individual Character Response

Politics as a theme is discursively handled in most African literature as is perceptible in literary works both in colonial and postcolonial periods. An appraisal of African literature shows that most literary works on the continent are political because the writers journey around the politics of the day in their works. According to Ngugi Wa Thiong'o in his text *Writers in Politics*,

A writer's subject matter is history, (that is) the process of man acting on nature and changing it and in so doing acting on and changing himself. The entire changing relations of production and hence the changing power relations consequent on mutable modes of production is a whole territory of a writers literary concern. Therefore politics is part and parcel of this literary territory. (72)

Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's argument implies that a writer's raw material is the social conditions obtainable at the point in time of a literary production. He therefore sees literature as a discipline that has often given the society "sharper insights into the moving spirit of an epoch than all the historical and political documents treating the same moments in a society's development" (72).

In his analysis of a political novel, Simon Gikandi argues that such a work is concerned with the internal workings of the body politics, its character's familiarity of the impact of political forces in the wildest possible sense, and how the author seeks to craft a totality of social, economic and political experience, and his characters address themselves to

the life and experience in both the actual world and that of the novel (73). In this regard, politics provide raw material from which imaginative writing emanates. Simon Gikandi continues to argue that, the political novelist seeks a medium which can express his (her) point of view without resorting to mere (sloganizing). The author's challenge, according to him, is to create a fictional world which is an accurate depiction of the real world in the course of which the authorial vision will emerge as a logical development of the interaction of characters and their situations (73). Gikandi's argument is appropriate in analysing Marjorie Oludhe's *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment* since it helps this research to inspect Marjorie Oludhe's presentation of the male characters in terms of how they negotiate and situate themselves in the public space and how this influences their relationships with others in the private arena. Politics as a raw material or territory of the literary writers is insufficiently exploited and most women's writing are reacting to 'maltreatment' of women thus their energy is focused on correcting the stereotypical portrayal of women in literary works. A reading of the novels indicates that for every political event that takes place in the society, the male characters lives take a destructive path which is geared toward their double colonization. This study does not wish to romanticize politics as a public space that renders positive outcomes and which is also empowering, but as an amphitheatre which Marjorie Oludhe manipulates to vilify the image of men.

All through Marjorie Oludhe's *Coming to birth* and *The Present Moment*, political upheavals are closely linked with what happens in the men's lives. There seems to be an intersection of the public space with the private space. In *Coming to Birth*, for instance, there is interplay between masculine micro cultures and nationalist ideology. The police intrusion in Paulina's house acts as a catalyst for Paulina's second miscarriage (31). In this way, the personal space and privacy is violated and interfered with by the government machinery. The brutality and violence vested in the police force is championed by the colonial masters to

protect their interests in the colony regardless of the subject's welfare. The force which police employ to get into Paulina's house is excessive. The same brutality is allegedly curved in Martin. Martin's penile penetration can be interpreted to trigger Paulina's first miscarriage (9). The sexual violence imbued in Martin is construed to feed his sexual appetite regardless of Paulina's sickly state. This can be read as an attempt by Marjorie Oludhe to look at men as a pastiche of the colonial masters. Both are portrayed as murderers of women's efforts to assert themselves. Men supposedly use the patriarchal dividend to thwart women's progression. The foetus Paulina carries at the different times of intrusions is believed to be the only source of hope. Men purportedly, out of greed, fail to give the 'new lives' opportunities. This seems to explain why Mimi in *The Present Moment* is glad that Robert's children do not live since she won't have trusted them (119). The Male characters are viewed with a lot of suspicion as they are allegedly ill-hearted. The female characters are endangered by the presence of male characters in their midst and for them to access the world then they must be eliminated. Such portraitures undermine the dignity and integrity of male characters that do gender in transgressive ways.

Using political space, Marjorie Oludhe alludes that men are fraudulent and retrogressive. For instance in *Coming to Birth*, after Mr M wins his parliamentary seat; a delegation comes asking for different things from their member of parliament. It is at this point that the alleged insincerity of male leaders is depicted. Mr M says he is in church but in the truest sense he is sleeping. Marjorie Oludhe offers statements of national history in terms of politics and its *performance*. As politicians, men are caricatured as disingenuous and underscore their underperformance as leaders. It is the self that is allegedly first and foremost. She gives us an interpretation of Kenya's history as a gendered space. For instance, the ending of the novel suggests that Kenya's post-colonial leadership is a failure under male leadership and it is perhaps time to embrace a female leadership. According to Paulina:

Perhaps women's work was like that. The word of creation is the same one you used particularly for knitting, or pottery. Men's work so often destructive- clearing spaces, breaking things down to pulp, making decisions- and how often did the decisions amount to anything tangible? Words in the air, pious intentions, rules about what not to do. She was glad that a lot of her work lay in making and mending things. (Oludhe 129) sic

This observation portrays men as destructive not only to property but also to individual characters' desire to move out of societal confines and restrictions since the system is full of 'rules of what not to do' which allegedly leads to total subjugation.

The politics of the day is highlighted in *Coming to Birth* when Rachel informs Paulina that there is "emergency and a lot of barbed wire" (8). This restriction of space can be interpreted as a test of Kenyans' ability to explore the spaces available to them in an attempt to empower themselves and in so doing interrogates the social structures that limit their quest for self-realization. The barbed wires become a demarcation line between freedom and enslavement so are the patriarchal walls. Similarly, Martin like colonialists supposedly locks Paulina inside the house and leaves with the keys (25). This can be interpreted as patriarchal space created around Paulina that Martin allegedly uses to curtail Paulina's access to the outside world. This is an attempt to portray Martin as domesticating, taming, and dominating Paulina. Men who fight wars to protect women, who go out into the work place and by the sweat of their brows earn money to feed their families, are now viewed as uncouth monsters, women oppressors, holding women back from "achieving their full potential," interested only in abusing women and enslaving them. Identity formation is out of free will, it is never predestined. Both men and women can decide to either break the yolk of patriarchy or live by its dictates. An individual is not bound by the rules of patriarchy but it is a matter of choice. Men, therefore, should not bear the brunt of colonisation that comes along with patriarchy as

an institution. Identity is free floating and doing gender is not performing prescribed roles but one can take a leap of change. Mary Roebing once said that women have “almost unbelievable economic power” but “do not use the influence (it) gives them.” Women’s failure to pursue opportunities in both political and economic spaces has always been much of a choice than feminists admit. The most significant barrier to a woman’s market success is her own unwillingness to constrict her maternal, marital, and domestic roles.

Men are caricatured as white men bed fellows. Being birds of the same feather, men presumably are quick at being alienated and fitting in the white masters’ shoes. In *The Present Moment*, John Wanyama prefers being addressed as Mr John and expects Wairimu to walk submissively behind him. He brags that the best way to advance is to work in the white man’s household and he can be taken as an example. “His neat shirt and shorts and tyre-rubber sandals, his pair of keys, his baptised status, his children going to school, his self-contained house and two servants under him” (52). John Wanyama is presented as a man without a vision of getting beyond Nairobi space. He is satirized as preferring to be a white man’s servant, doing the kind of work which women do at home. Anyone who wants advancement must look for something better. John Wanyama’s pride in domestic service is what this research calls gender relations. Men do not dominate all fields of life. They too, play subordinate roles in certain contexts. They are equally oppressed in different ways.

In *Coming to Birth*, men’s interactions with others are characterized with the self. According to Marjorie Oludhe, their egoistic nature pervades all walks of life. The political space is infested with selfishness which seemingly comes from men. This, consequently, eats away democracy. Contrary to Mrs M who encourages and assures Paulina of her help, Martin declines to help Paulina in rallying women to drum support for the release of Chelegat Mutai. The male characters at this point are accused of being barriers to women’s search for emancipation. Men in the embodiment of Mr M and Martin are depicted as more concerned

with protecting their positions and wealth and less with the pain others go through in the society especially women. When Mrs M approaches her husband about their plan of rallying women to force the government to release Chelegat, he is infuriated and tells her that one person can sink or swim without making it right to put others in danger. He intends to keep his head, seat and chance of helping people in his constituency (113). For M, Chelegat's life is not important so long as his personal ambitions are not tampered with. In this presentation, the political space is eroticized with men having the desire to satisfy and feed the self in the political arena without allegedly caring about the plight of others. "The fish are the last to discover the ocean" is an expression which can be used to call upon feminist literary writers to bring home to men the realisation that in the context of the gender power system, men are the norm. The creation of gender equal society in both the social and political spaces, will not be achieved unless men and women work together to transform conditions that govern the lives of both sexes.

4.5 Conclusions

This chapter looks at violence, commoditisation of men, deconstructed images of men and finally men's negotiation of political space as the site upon which the vilifications of their characters takes the centre stage. What is constant in *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment* is the social position of men in a gendered political category of dominance. Home occupies both a literal and a conceptual space in Marjorie Oludhe's selected novels. Marjorie Oludhe's interests in home are understood through a prism of patriarchal history. In her literary imaginations, Marjorie Oludhe represents the idea of marriage as a dislocated home place for African women. Her characterisation of home does not offer peace and serenity. In *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment*, the domestic is not impervious to societal ills. The sexual, verbal, and physical forms of violence are frequently replayed in this domestic arena with disastrous consequences. It is not geography that signals home, but identity. Thus, it is

not the rural or urban that defines home; instead, certain characters transcend the temporal and social divisions in order to become spaces of home for themselves.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CONFLUENCE BETWEEN THE LITERARY DEVICES AND THE DENIGRATING MALE IMAGES

5.1 Introduction

The radical disruption of linear flow of narrative; frustration of conventional expectations concerning unity and coherence of plot and character and the cause and effect development thereof; the deployment of ironic and ambiguous juxtapositions to call into question the moral and philosophical meaning of literary actions; the adoption of a tone of epistemological self-mockery aimed at naïve pretensions of bourgeois rationality; the opposition of inward consciousness to rational, public, objective discourse; and an inclination to subjective distortion to point up the evanescence of the social world of the nineteenth century bourgeois. (Barth 19)

This research interrogates the extent to which Marjorie Oludhe's deployment of literary devices help to reproduce the denigrated male image. At issue is the need to examine masculinity as it is inflected in culturally specific ways so as to better account for how it is shaped by such factors as class, ethnicity, sexuality, age, nationality and so forth. The main focus is on the literary techniques and their influence on the comprehension of stereotypes to show how the social functions of literary devices are modulated by false-consciousness. The literary devices serve Marjorie Oludhe as an expressive and critical voice. The potential power that resides in art is one far greater than entertainment. Literary devices become vehicles of social stereotypes as pronounced in *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment*. The literary devices being the heart and soul of every expression breathe life in words. Starkly put, Marjorie Oludhe does not shy away from manipulating the literary devices to denigrate the male image while exalting the female one.

This section is divided into six sub-sections which deal with different literary devices. The sub-sections I delve into the use of motif; juxtaposition; sarcasm; ellipses; humour, and register respectively in the disparagement of male personages.

5.2 Motif

5.2.1 Motif of Fragmentation

Fragmentation is thematic in both *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment*. The plots, characters, themes and narrative forms themselves are broken. They become the cultural detritus through which the different speakers wade. Marjorie Oludhe reinforces fragmentation of reality and contradicts Hegelian notions of totality and wholeness. She is concerned with representing modernity which supersedes itself. Modernity must, in order to emerge, annihilate the past. The fragmented non-chronologic form adapted by Marjorie Oludhe in *The Present Moment* revolutionises literary language. She employs the famous dictum “make it new.” She rejects the old Victorian standards of how art should be made, consumed and what it should mean. She deploys multiple narrated stories and discontinuous narrative form. Marjorie Oludhe perverts the form in order to resist the ideological trajectories associated with the genre, specifically the notion of the development of the autonomous rational subject. The characters reconstruct meaning by reassembling the pieces of history. Importantly, there is rebirth and rejuvenation in ruin. However, this is only true with reference to the female characters in the selected novels. The male characters wallow in stagnation leading to their fragmentations in the changing world.

In *Coming to Birth*, images of castration and its metaphorical equivalent- impotence- recur pathologically in the novel. The notion of Martin being divested of virility, authority, and power constitutes the most prevalent theme in the novel. His fragmented or disjointed life is aptly illustrated in the impotent life he leads. The fragmented life is an effort by Marjorie Oludhe to present Martin as directionless, unproductive, chaotic, and short-sighted. Martin

engages in a myriad of intimate relationships which are counter-productive in order to protect his masculine ego. He engages in a multitude of sexual connections with women, for example, Fauzia, Nancy, and Fatima. All these sexual encounters with these women prove futile. He remains a childless man. Martin's virility and potency are put to test. The achievement of tests of manhood that entails tremendous sexual adventures is purportedly meant to garner him the reverence and honour to his society. Sex in Martin is less about pleasure and more about proving manhood and asserting power. The phallic power is purportedly important in Martin's life since it is the validation of masculinity. The phallus, a symbolic representation of the erect male sex organ is the signifier that betokens power and privilege.

Furthermore, Martin's exasperation heightens when Fauzia leaves. He laments that he does not feel like it anyway. Martin's inadequacy amplifies when Paulina who is seemingly goal-oriented conceives with Simon. This further denigrates Martin's image as a failure; a good for nothing person. There is rejection of conventional truths and figures of authorities here. The truths that men are sturdy oaks and big wheels are derided through Martin's failure to conquer the world of women. The themes of loss, isolation and exile from society are apparent. Martin becomes disenfranchised from the human community when he fails to meet the masculinity's ideals. His hungers for power make him not to be an avant-garde. The appetite to create a mark in his life is so great that he allegedly does not work smart. This moralistic motif is quite prevalent in the novel and serves to reinforce Martin's ineffectual life and hypocrisy in the face of failure. It also reflects a frank awareness of societal ills and of Martin's capacity for cruelty. It is unsurprisingly, then, that images of phallic impotency are recurrent since *Coming to Birth* is focalised with Marjorie Oludhe's obsession with displays of power and masculinity. Martin is caricatured as continuously blaming Paulina for his fruitless life and Marjorie Oludhe deliberately decides to exonerate Paulina from such

blames by her having a child with Simon. Through its repetition, the moralistic motif captures the theme of moral degradation in Martin. It is a commentary on moral rot that bereft Martin's life. The tone is contemptuous and the attitude detestable.

In *Coming to Birth*, another motif of fragmentation is mirrored in Paulina's constant miscarriages. Martin impregnates Paulina three times and in all these pregnancies, none is forthcoming. This becomes an annotation for Martin's lack of virility. He is unable to survive in the wild. Sex is a marker of transition from childhood to manhood in men's lives. Being in a hurry to plant his feet in the world and command respect, Martin supposedly engages in marital sex at a very tender age. Ahoya observes that probably Martin's beatings of Paulina might have stemmed from the fact that his friends have been telling him he is too young to marry and now he begins to wonder how he would manage (24). Marjorie Oludhe does not allow the pregnancies to come to term to bring to the fore Martin's impatience and immaturity. Paradoxically, when the ripe time comes for him to be a father, he is allegedly sexually deformed as he has expended all his energies chasing the winds. Martin goes home and only engages in verbal sex; talks about having children but leaves for Nairobi without seeing his wife in person. He is self-delusionary. Consequently, Paulina ultimately has a child out of wedlock. The virility of Paulina is lauded while that of Martin is derided. Celebrating the collapse of conventional forms, Marjorie Oludhe reverses traditional gender roles. Borrowing from modernism, Marjorie Oludhe marks a distinctive break with Victorian Bourgeois' morality. She presents a profoundly pessimistic picture of a culture in disarray. This despair results in an apparent apathy and moral relativism.

Martin's degeneration is also captured in his movement from independence to dependence. His lack of vision is echoed here. He is not development conscious. At the beginning, Martin seems focused. He has a neatly made bed, a small wooden cupboard with cups and plate, a folding table and three wooden chairs. He also has three suitcases, a lamp, a

charcoal burner, a teapot, and an enamel basin in readiness for his wife in Pumwani. He later moves from a little spacious house to a tiny squeezed room in Kariokor. It is till then that he begins to cohabit with friends in order to save. Having joint households, ironically, does not help him at all as nothing accrues in his post bank account. Ultimately, Martin moves his things bit by bit to Paulina's house allegedly for security and saving purposes (96). This movement motif reinforces the saying "behind the success of every man lies a woman." Martin's presumed lack of organisational skills is displayed in his inability to overcome economic challenges despite his improved financial status. Furthermore, Martin's portraiture in the above description seems to present him as missing the other rib for him to be complete; he is a wallet while Paulina is a planner. Marjorie Oludhe through the use of this fragmentation motif attempts to distort the notion of subjective personhood. The conventional representation of men as subjects is destroyed. Martin is caricatured for not being a master of his own life and that of his own household. However, Paulina is able to improve her financial and social standings despite Martin's absence in her life. Marjorie Oludhe; therefore, simply reverses the gender roles thus maintaining the status quo. In summary, the movement motif addresses the theme of fragmentation leading to desolation and degradation. Martin's life is disjointed and loses his self.

5.2.2 The Dead Tree Motif: The Death of Masculinity

The imagistic references to the dead tree in *The Present Moment* bring out the concept of evil. The dead tree motif establishes a pattern of ideas that serve different conceptual purposes. Death is used as an ironic metaphor for life. It offers an absurd commentary on the brevity and meaninglessness of men's lives and the finality of their deaths.

In *The Present Moment*, Rahel and other girls are alarmed by the silvery replica of living branches and the vivid green of moss. They turn away quickly breaking no branch (3). The tree is full of life and scary at the beginning which brings to the fore the oedipal trope.

This reminiscence of the living tree signifies the past when hegemonic masculinity is flourishing. The silvery replica of living branches connotes the erect penis that embodies assortments of rot (moss). The oedipal trope is perceived as that machinery that dominates, hates, rapes and creates fear. The slimy image of the tree captures the ills of patriarchy where men are allegedly scary, brutal, and a scum forcing women to scamper for safety. As the narrative unfolds, the image of the dead tree that lies before Rahel's eyes, as she clings to it for its symmetry, its detachment, and total recall, signifies the loss of masculinity. The dead tree motif not only establishes a dark and shadowy atmosphere but also weaves together the thematic complexities of the plot. With women's empowerment, men have become powerless and inadequate. However, the wound is still fresh in the women's lives. The recurrence of the image of the dead tree hence becomes a metaphor for the black women's lingering sorrow for an intolerable brutality of patriarchy, a symbol dramatic and vivid enough to counteract the conspicuous absence of conventional realist language to account for that specific brand of anguish.

Besides, the image works as a reflector and intensifier. It depicts the persistence and intensification of Rahel's grief over time. It shows how incomprehensibly cruel man can be especially with regard to gender difference. Rahel having been a victim cannot forget the military rule that her entire life has been part of. The image of the dead tree allows her to make connections between the suppression and fear she endured in her personal life and the harassment and limitations imposed upon women collectively. Her emotions are stirred up by the mere image of the flaccid penis. The alleged inexpressiveness of men and their iron-fist rule leaves Rahel in an excruciating pain. Marjorie Oludhe's language is rife with conjuring haunting images which seeks to articulate an experience of womanhood and loss rendered unspeakable due to the brutal and inexpressive nature of men.

Moreover, Rahel's prolonged sickness is significant as it signifies the ailing masculinity and in her death, women characters become triumphant since it is a representation of the death of masculinity. Mortality exists as the defining sensibility and is rooted in a personal experience of the anguish of living and of death. The death of masculinity is also aligned with ideas of men's retreat into solipsism, escape and alienation. Correspondingly, it produces states of a potential retreat into the self in order to escape the omnipresent forces of death and decay. In *The Present Moment*, Vitalis' sensitive inclinations lead to his psychotic breakdown (6) and subsequent alienation which is supposedly motivated by an overwhelming sense of his own inadequacy, failure and incompetence as a real man. Vitalis, in relation to whom the external and internal forces collude, symbolically cuts him away from humanity. As Rahel breathes her last breath, she sees the fearful tree now clothed in blossom and birds are singing in the branches (155). The penis is not covered in moss anymore but beautiful flowers which is a strange foreboding as the story edges towards its end. The traditional concept of masculinity is destroyed and in its place is a contemporary man who can love, be expressive, nurture and care. Thus ultimately, the end of the *Present Moment's* narrations gesture toward new beginnings whilst refusing to foreclose on the possible future trajectories the men's lives take. The novel ends with the feminisation of the society as the tree is finally covered with beautiful flowers. The happy ending, that epistemologically simple foreclosure of the process of human growth is undermined by the narrator's irony. As much as there is possible change in the future foreshadowed by Rahel, masculinity is killed. Marjorie Oludhe fails to appreciate the different arrays of masculinities. It therefore concludes with ambiguity and uncertainty, and thus resists the simplicity and teleology of the happy ending of the world of in-between. The frequent use of motif, therefore; connects different moments that might seem otherwise separated by time and space.

Furthermore, the thematic death thread seems to represent men as the river between women's achievements. The symbolic deaths of father figures have been used to mock at the fragility of patriarchal laws where fathers are the subjects of households. Death is seen as means of freedom and appropriating power for women. It is presented as the ultimate essential dilemma, one which arouses terrible anxiety in Rahel and the other women at the Refuge camp as it offers them avenues toward self-discoveries. If we are to talk of equity then it must be on equal footing. The traditional component which describes men as sturdy oak still stands even in the feminization of the society. They are believed to be tough hence can weather the hard conditions of life as women are aided to achieve. The death motif; therefore, brings to the fore the question of how and whether men and women can live together and prosper.

5.3 Juxtaposition: The Bipolarisation of Gender

Stereotypes are either negative or positive attributes that are given to individuals or groups, and at times with a strain of embellishment, false prediction, and false simplification. The observation, differentiation, identification, and categorisation of individuals, groups of people, or even societies as fixed or inflexible images do not usually take into consideration the complexity of exceptionalism and the multidimensional character of attributes. Prejudices and biased considerations lead to false assumptions, necessitating, at times, misunderstanding. It becomes very problematic, for example, to simply or reductively judge someone based on a stereotype without proper knowledge of facts pertaining to the uniqueness or distinctive features he/she has that may not adhere to the stereotype. For instance in *The Present Moment*, Priscilla warns Mary not to trust her brother as no one knows the heart of a man except the spirit of man that is in him. He may be the murderer of Joseph Baraka as men are all the same (148). While stereotypes may be accurate and even necessary, there should be allowance or space for complexity and flexibility. That is, they

should not be reductively seen as absolutes, but as dynamic and modifiable. The pattern of oppositional relationships set up by Marjorie Oludhe in the selected texts allow for an expression of conflict between rival authorities. This conflict with one ideal pitted against another then becomes a motive force that underlies the development of the denigrated identities of men. It leads to parabolic characterisation where figures are generalised rather than particularised, deployed as fixed moral traits rather than explored for their psychological complexities. This places men in the negative fiction yet becomes the central thread of Marjorie Oludhe's exposition. The contrasting aspects; therefore, reflect one another.

In *The Present Moment*, the atmospheric juxtaposition is captured. Wairimu says that she sees the golden haze over the city turns black and smoky. The men whom she admires for their knowledge of other languages, their clothes, their command of town life, mostly show no respect for either girl or woman, and little enough even for elders: the dream turns into a nightmare (49). This intimation seems to denigrate the images of men to a much higher notch. There is a state of hopelessness in gender relations. The future seems bleak. Men are presented as incapable of changing. They are incorrigible. Wairimu goes to the city hoping to see a different set of men altogether from those in the village whose lives are anchored in chauvinism. Wairimu views the city as a space for change not only in terms of infrastructure but also behaviour. She is mesmerised that the glamorous outward appearance of men is a mere facade. The juxtaposition between the golden haze and black, smoky atmosphere engulfing the city brings out the supposedly camouflage nature of men. The sensational appearance is a disguise as beneath it, there lays a rotten morass. Men are perceived as dangerous and destructive. In the same vein, this delineation captures men as dishonest people who cannot be trusted. Marjorie Oludhe seems to highlight the fact that men are the same irrespective of their social milieu. There seems to be no barricade between the enlightened and the ignorant; they are the same regardless of their societal standings.

Furthermore as juxtaposed symbols, the golden haze and darkness connote two other extremes: men's fixation and the maintenance of the status quo. To Wairimu; therefore, the city is not a utopian space of home.

In *The Present Moment*, the emergency at the national and individual levels are juxtaposed. As much as emergency ended twenty years ago and they are now free, the women at the Refuge camp seem unable to forget the pain that exist in their lives (43). The emergency is not a single national catastrophe but a repetition on a large scale of the kind of situation people encounter in their domesticated arenas. The emergency becomes a metaphoric substitution to repress words for ills that should otherwise not be named since they are too painful to name hence creates unconscious which is repository of repressed. Just like the emergencies, the men's rule allegedly leaves women haunted with the images of blood and iron. Marjorie Oludhe decries the blood spilled by Africans to defend their sovereignty which is a replica to that spilled by women in their domestic arena. The symbolic realm provides us with the conceptual categories of our shared world which opens the world of various binary oppositions. The brutal killings of Kenyans, pools of blood drenched all over, hardships that men and women are subjected to and the slavery that form part of the African lives become a pastiche for the lives that the Kenyan women lead in the male dominated arenas. The experiences that this group of women recollect capture the states of emergencies that women go through within their domesticated lives before they are rescued and placed at the Refuge camp. The *Present Moment's* plot emerges in non-linear fragments as different characters remember their experiences. Since many of these memories have been repressed for a long time, the process of unearthing them is slow and painful. They have to piece together the fragments and different accounts in order to find coherent meaning for themselves. Through flashbacks and recollections, *The Present Moment* chronicles the different settings of home for women in the Refuge camp. They dissociate themselves from

home. It is in these spaces that they are allegedly physically and sexually abused by men. They are traumatised by the horrors of violence that they have to live through. The Refugee camp becomes a restorative centre. It becomes a metaphoric site of home. The importance of home as reflective of yearnings and memories need to be appreciated. It is counterproductive to attempt to understand male characters within a dichotomous framework of agent and victim. Home, although not resistant to cultural and social harms, is a locale capable of continual renewal and recreation.

Moreover, history provides the exterior view of colonialism, and memory is the personal interior view. These highlight the polarities of home through gender and space. In both cases, men are allegedly solely responsible for the miseries in the women's lives both in the public and the private spaces hence double colonisation. This delineation trivialises the pain that men, like Harry Thuku who leads his life in detention and Vitalis' father who has a big scar on his thigh as a reminder of war, go through during the pre-independent Kenya. Men just like women face the atrocities that the state of emergency subjects them to. The contraries of man and woman train us to place more vices on men and masculinity without any rational argumentation that defends such an assumption. These images are allegedly fixed; they are not revised as culture transforms nor do they reflect the material, social world the subject finds himself or herself in. Marjorie Oludhe; therefore, engages history in terms of where home is an unstable topography between *protected* private space and vulnerable public space threatened by the colonial destructive desire to reduce bodies to chattel. The violence that permeates the larger community similarly infiltrates each family environment. She does not let the readers forget the pain of what happens historically, the consequences of specific events because these form the contexts of lives she explores. Historical facts, contextual specifics like state of emergency deeply evocative renditions of individual women experience and painstakingly researched details convince readers of the truth of the history that Marjorie

Oludhe portrays. This is deliberately meant to authenticate men's cruelty and antagonism. Domestic spaces represent sites of crisis and self-destruction while the Refugee camp becomes a platform that brings women to help hold the fragments of their lives together.

Decisive contrasts abound in *The Present Moment* and *Coming to Birth* between the female and male characters. The sterility of male space is juxtaposed against the rich vitality of the female space. In *Coming to Birth*, Paulina's experiences in the familial hostile environment inspire journeys (both literal and psychological) of self-re-creation which is a fundamental feminist tenet. Paulina's journey reflects the journey towards empowerment and autonomy. Juxtaposed against Paulina's home is Martin's. Her home is antithetical to Martin's. Paulina's home is neat and comfortable. She has bought a new bed and mattress, a food cupboard and some upright chairs while Martin is getting fatter and drinks beer. Though Martin has improved his position in the firm after getting a certificate, he does not have a home (46). Marjorie Oludhe seeks to reverse the hierarchies implied in binary pairs to favour the feminine over masculine pole instead of erasing the boundaries between oppositions. Privileging the feminine pole reassert the whole principle of opposition. This description captures women like Paulina as development conscious and good planners while men like Martin as mere wallets that lack in vision. Paulina is seemingly complete with or without a man in her life while Martin is always missing the half to make his life complete. Martin's supposedly lack of organisational skills is pronounced when he begins to move in with friends hoping to save which he does not but increasingly becomes dependent. Martin despite improving in his position in the firm indulges in drinking beer while his house is shamed. This castigates him as being careless with his life, preoccupied with the self, and extravagant in his spending. Martin's journeys reflect his disempowerment and purposelessness. He is disillusioned and alienated from the world. As Paulina transcends the physical and psychological matrix of domination, Martin remains entrapped in it. This abstractly

emphasises the profound distinction between Paulina and Martin; the male characters contrast sharply with the strong maternal characters. Paulina is used as a foil to Martin to contrast and highlight their character differences.

Marjorie Oludhe criticizes men for their meanness and brutality. Their meanness and cruelty is not only directed towards women but also their own children. Marjorie Oludhe in her bid to represent how the patriarchal structures devalue girls overstretches it and views men as devoid of tenderness and parental instincts. Joan in *Coming to Birth* weeps openly alleging that her girls would not eat properly while she is away just because they were girls. She says that her husband is so mean that he will not allow his daughters eat corn on the cob (42). This delineation shows Joan's husband as ill-suited for parenting. The dualism of good and evil as intimately captured in Joan and her husband respectively provides rhetorical effect in so far as men's role as breadwinners is concerned. As readers, we are left in suspense and reflection of man's capacity to sufficiently provide for his household with his seemingly mean-fisted spirit. The role of Joan's husband as the breadwinner is obsolete. He is encouraged to be individualistic and carefree. He needs to feel needed as much as Joan does. If the new role of women is to be the provider then we need a constructive understanding in the ways we need the strengths of men without leaving the doors open for a neo-fascist interpretation for the breakdown of the family and a macho backlash to role reversal. Men's world through Joan's husband presentation is a selfish one while the female world through Joan's is selfless. Joan drops out of college for her children's sake. The qualities of each is placed side by side and each play off the emotions of the other such that goodness of one is highlighted due to the bad qualities of the other. There is need to see a world based on humanity rather than prejudged roles.

John Wanyama in *The Present Moment* is self-actualized with his domestic service and he tells Wairimu that that is really important work for women. He boasts of his neat shirt

and shorts and tyre-rubber sandals, his pair of keys, his baptised status, his children going to school and his self-contained house and two servants under him (52). This is juxtaposed with Wairimu's dream who desires to know Swahili, not in order to be a servant like Mr John, even a rich servant but to enter a wider world than the Kikuyu world (53). This description presents John Wanyama as materialistic and opportunistic. He is an embodiment of materialism and uses every opportunity that presents itself before him for self-gratification. He goes to greater miles to get that which his heart desires: power. John Wanyama, though a man to speak, is ready to do domestic work which is presumably the women's domain to stand out. He is mesmerised with very trivial things which mock his priorities in life. He feels great being westernised; he lavishes all that is white. This can be interpreted as an attempt to picture John Wanyama as being hungry to have a feel of power just like the colonial masters hence the greed to exert power that goes beyond the private space. Kiswahili becomes a pre-requisite for power in Wanyama's life which is juxtaposed with that of Wairimu. For Wairimu, Kiswahili is pivotal in embracing the wider space that goes beyond Kikuyu. It is a tool for reaching out to others in the greater society. It has far-reaching implications than the material world. It is a platform for making the world a global village hence pertinent for development. This intimation undermines the patriarchal ideology by means of reversal of initial terms in relation to sexual allocation of roles and responsibilities. Marjorie Oludhe casts men in the role of colonial collaborators and portrays women as being foremost in offering resistance to the kind of dominations. Women are clear-sighted while men are irrational.

Correspondingly, Judith Kegan in *Masculinity Studies and Feminist Theory: New Direction* formulated a definition of masculinity and femininity which the above argument would like to quote here: "masculinity is a nostalgic formulation, always missing, lost, or about to be lost. Its ideals form located in a past that advances with each generation in order

to recede just beyond its grasp. Feminism, in contrast, is a utopian discourse of an ideal future, never yet attained, whose myth celebrates alliances that manage conflicts within comprehensive metanarratives and narratives of comprehension”(10). Applying this definition to the characters under scrutiny, this research argues that *The Present Moment* engages both masculinity and femininity and shows how John Wanyama is absorbed in looking back despite civilisation while Wairimu is intent on moving forward and embracing change.

In summary, Laurence Geary in “Post Genderism” *Beyond the Gender Binary* argues that human beings are deeply circumscribed and determined by our accidental binary gender assignments (12). The gender binary shapes the human condition, causing us to see the world through basic binary categories, that is, from our metaphysics to our linguistics. Marjorie Oludhe uses biological gender dimorphism as the most basic power dynamic in society that allows men to coerce women with their stronger bodies and dominance-driven behaviour. She acknowledges the inescapability of men roles per se. In *Coming to Birth*, Paulina comments that she enjoys doing things with her hands and she observes that women are largely engaged in creation work while men’s work is so often destructive (130). To Paulina; therefore, women are constructive and development oriented while their male counterparts are damaging. The purpose of juxtaposing the gender entities is to highlight the contrast between the two. This presentation of gender binary shows the inescapability of gender roles thus undermining individual agency. Marjorie Oludhe fails to take cognizance of the enlightenment values and emergent human potentials which have come into conflict with the rigid gender binary. The patriarchal power, culture, and thought are slowly dismantled with the wake of post modernism which shapes cultural trajectory toward a post gender future. There is integration of masculinity and femininity into a new libratory androgynous frontier that consequently leads to emancipation from patriarchy and capitalism. A truly feminist

liberator would seek to deconstruct and free us from the enforced linkages between biological sex, performative gender, and heterosexual desire. There must be intentional subversion of the gender binary which Judith Butler calls “gender trouble.”

Reproducing the binary gender sustains rather than weakens patriarchy: gender polarization has more insidious effects as it is used to rationalize oppression. Men’s derogatory language, for instance, is normalised in *The Present Moment*. It becomes not surprising then when the lunatic soldier hauls abuses at the passers-by. As much as they create a lot of pain in the women folk in the present moment, they seem to have resigned to the insults (5). By viewing gender as unstable quality but as something that exists only in the works of its production, one can more fully represent the many ways in which gender is experienced and exhibited. In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler argues that the subject does not precede action: there is no being behind doing; the doer is merely a fiction added to the deed (53). By looking at gender as doing, feminists can avoid the trap of recreating gender as a set of fixed, opposed traits. However, thinking of gender as doing does not guarantee that one will avoid reifying binary gender. Rethinking gender as performance allows the concept to include a wider array of gender constructions, describing distinct gender productions and ascribing them to differences in biological sex reinforces the binary system. Furthermore, using gender as performance perspective does not mean that one can ignore gender polarization: it persists online as it does off. In *Undoing Gender*, Judith Butler argues that gender is “a mode of becoming that, in becoming otherwise, exceeds the norm, reworks the norm, and makes us see how realities to which we thought we were confined are not written in stone” (29). Conceiving of gender as under constant construction, in brief, helps to demystify and thus disrupts the binary gender system which naturalises patriarchy. The terms gender trouble, gender blending, transgender, or cross gender are testimonies to gender as already moving beyond naturalized male/female dichotomous category.

5.4 Literary Sarcasm: The Angelic Beast

The present Moment and *Coming to Birth* are born under the astrological sign of sarcasm laced with a tinge of irony. Irony as a structural principle engenders a kind of self-reflexivity. The two selected novels analysed in this thesis arguably epitomise the use of this couplet -sarcasm and irony- to subvert and challenge conventional gendered expectations through the inducement of reflexivity in the reader akin to Julia Kristeva's individual revolt.

Marjorie Oludhe in *Coming to Birth* uses sarcasm to etch out men in details on what she views as double standards. Men purportedly expect so much from women which they as a group fail to lead by example. Martin himself is allegedly not dignified yet when rumours reach him that his wife is having illicit affairs with Simon, he boils with anger and goes home to avenge for the loss of his dignity (56). The injustice in his behaviour undergirds this performance. His action is loaded with double standards of the day. It is this double-sided reality that allegedly drives Paulina to seek her independence. He further claims he has been patient enough with his wife's infertility and fails to see that he is equally impotent. He has been having a chain of women in his life and none has born him a child. From the above description, Martin is being caricatured as being too quick to remove logs from Paulina's eyes without reflecting on his own actions. He is allegedly a decadent who is fascinated with dark aesthetics regardless of moral question. He is tempestuous and selfish. Martin downplays his own infidelity and aggravates Paulina's. Marjorie Oludhe denigrates Martin when he breaks two of Paulina's chairs and throws the clothes out of her best suitcase and takes it away with him. This presentation depicts him as cruel and hypocritical. Martin disowns Paulina for her unfaithfulness but does not condemn and reject evil with all that it presents.

In *The Present Moment*, Robert similarly embarrasses Mimi when he gets wind of the lorry driver's association with her. He comes to the servant quarters shouting at her, accusing her of entertaining native men in her room which amounts to an insult to the memsahib as

though she is not being paid enough. He throws cooking pots about and claims that Mimi does not know what is good for her (122). Ironically, he is portrayed as an incorrigible character who has an incident with a female suspect carefully hushed up; coarse talk in front of the nursing sisters. He seems to have forgotten that he used to call Mimi to warm his bed when she agreed to help him set the new house for the memsahib's coming. Robert's pretentious nature is displayed in this intimation. Sarcasm is used, therefore, to show both Martin and Robert's foolishness and drive this point home in a more cutting edge. Marjorie Oludhe does not suspend judgement but sends them up as degenerates.

There is a bizarre and unspoken competition deeply ingrained in *Coming to Birth*. Rachel's husband is so furious and disappointed that the Ayah's pregnancy is someone else's. Rachel's husband despite having a wife and children has an illicit affair with his ayah. Shamefacedly, he openly gets furious and disappointed that the ayah's pregnancy is not his. The baby is palpably white-pink, wrinkled, and brown-eyed (39). This delineation presents Rachel's husband as a selfish character who cares very little of the emotional stability of the members of his family; what is of import to him is his infantilised ego. Rachel's Ayah's story, then, concerns itself with a male-male-female (erotic) triangle. And, predictably, the triangle involves two men engaged in a homosocial relation of rivalry over a woman. As has been demonstrated, male heterosexuality acts as a form of male homosociality, a way to prove one's masculinity, especially before and against other males. In this sense, then, male sexuality becomes extremely competitive, as men use sexuality to prove not only that they are manly, but also that they are manlier than other men. Rachel's husband resorts to anger and stereotypical male behaviour to punish the Ayah which suggests a phallic symbol. The Ayah moves into the traditional passive role of woman as a sexual trophy for the phallic male. The fact that the baby is not his makes him weak before his imaginary opponent; it is a world of competition, and survival is for the fittest. Rachel's husband is brought out as competition-

oriented and outcome-minded. The ideal male character created by Marjorie Oludhe acts within the framework of his traditional roles as a big wheel and sturdy oak. Marjorie Oludhe endorses an institutionalised and one-sided version of male heroism.

In *Coming to Birth*, the alleged irresponsible and careless nature of men is reflected in Simon's action. He has a sexual relationship with Paulina and upon realizing that she is pregnant, he decides to dissociate himself from her claiming his wife will not allow it (54). He is supposedly careless in his sexual encounter especially taking into account that he has knowledge of Paulina being Martin's wife. He does not want to take responsibility for his actions. To Simon, sexual engagements are not bordered on love but adventure. Simon also comes out as a cheap cheat who uses his wife and in-laws to run away from his mess. Paulina tells Simon:

You also have had what you wanted. A child of mine does not have to look to a father who will not stand up for him. She has been patient with you she will not start to make noise now. Repent towards your blessed in laws if that will make things better for you (Oludhe 68).

The above picture sharply criticises Simon's flimsy excuses he gives for terminating the affair. He belatedly realises that his wife will not approve of his illicit relationship and that his in-laws will be begrudged. All these revelations dawn on him upon realising that Paulina is pregnant. These, he allegedly use to run away from his obligation. Simon is presumably hypocritical, careless, cowardly, and cruel. Sex in Simon has no emotional circumference hence it becomes easy for him to hit and run without caring about the emotional turmoil left behind in the failed relationship.

In the same similitude, Rahel's brother-in-law in *The Present Moment* who was a DC before he retires is criticised for being deceptive and mean. As much as he owns a big farm

and enormous wealth, he does not help Rahel when she is in need since his responsibility is to the nation and not his wife's relations (44). "Charity begins at home" is a saying that seems to be elusive in Rahel's brother-in-law's life. This portraiture captures his hypocrisy in the face of looming responsibilities. Rahel's brother-in-law's meanness is articulated in his failure to extend a helping hand to his relations. It is preposterous that despite the colossal wealth he has, Rahel's brother-in-law does not help his wife's relations yet claims to be burdened with the national responsibilities. His wife's relation though a private space is part of the larger public domain. Rahel's brother-in-law's failure to provide and assist his relations is by extension his failure to serve the wider nation as well. His supposedly mean-hearted nature makes him use the wider society as a smoke screen to push away relatives since he is 'burdened' with national responsibilities. His service to the wider space is questioned if he cannot cater for his immediate relatives. He is supposedly mean and egocentric. The theme of deception and contradiction is highlighted.

In *The Present Moment*, Evans has been living with Priscilla for two years without being blessed with the fruit of the womb. Failure to have a child galvanises Evans' decision to take a flight. For fear of castration, he takes his flight to the seminary in Uganda. After three months, he writes a letter without address saying that the seminary offers everything to fulfil his ambition and he now has his eyes opened to the claims of the *true church* (85). Evans' incapacity to face the challenges of life is criticised. He takes to his heels when confronted with trials. He uses the church to hide from the truth. His acclamation of a true church can be interpreted as a form of relief from patriarchal expectations of him. He is married to the church that is devoid of societal roles and responsibilities. Evans' hypocrisy in the religious space is compounded when he ends up impregnating a follower. Being ashamed of his action because of his 'religious standing', he becomes a fugitive. Evans also comes out

as impatient and rash. Proving his manhood weighs heavily on his shoulders and takes irrational and sudden measures for solutions.

5.5 Ellipses or Disnarrativisation: Inclusion through Othering

A theme of marginalisation and silencing is pronounced. Men's voices and experiences are excluded and ignored. The male identities; consequently, become invisible hence reducing them to the plane of non-entities. The male characters are made marginal to the plot of the fiction. In *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment*, women characters are foregrounded while male characters play peripheral roles. The male characters present in the two selected novels are used to articulate the experiences and sufferings of women. The marginalisation of men is used to bring out the insignificant nature of men in the lives of women. They are merely problems and women can do without them. Men are defined and differentiated with reference to woman and not her with reference to him. He is incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. She is the subject, she is the absolute; he is the other. The politics of feminism suppresses men's voices and dominates social discourse and social action to the benefit of women and detriment of men. Instead of advocating for sameness, Marjorie Oludhe champions for otherness.

This research voices that invisibility is a precondition for the perpetuation of male dominance. In this respect, Sally Robinson reminds us that "one cannot question, let alone dismantle, what remains hidden from view" (1). While Judith Butler talks about the privilege of inhabiting an unmarked body that has been the patrimony of heteronormative man, it seems, then, that in order to question the privilege of unmarkedness, one needs to make the normative visible as a category in gender terms. In other words, in order to do away with universalizing notions of heterosexual masculinity, one needs, first of all, to gender it and render it visible.

In *The Present Moment* the main focus is on the survival of women. Various women's voices tell the story while the men are disconnected from the societies. Through flashbacks, the novel chronicles the different settings of home for women in the Refugee Camp. They dissociate themselves from home. It is in these spaces that they are allegedly physically and sexually abused. The men are marginalised in the sense that they are speechless. We never hear their voices. There is analogy and sort of contiguity between the physical body of a person and the urban space. The fictional city is created through a process of doubling with the literary purpose of articulating the psychological and physical bodies of the people living within its boundaries. Nairobi becomes a sexed utopia. It expresses the isolation and exclusion of the men as well as their fragmentation. Marjorie Oludhe, to rebuild the original identity, filters through a female space which she does not view it as external to the body but rather as its offshoot, a spreading of the female self in the physical world. Still as a frame of choices, the city enacts our sense of the future; not merely abstract, not mutable only, it fulfils time in utopia and dystopia images. It is herstory that is fore grounded: it is history for men. The *past* becomes a metaphorical orphan, suppressed and abandoned.

5.6 Humour

In *Coming to Birth*, Martin humorously tells Paulina that when he takes another wife she must be a Christian who will leave her hair not plaited and her ears without ornaments, who will dig in the fields and plaster walls and leave her children fat and naked (51). Martin's conception of the kind of wife he wants points out to how bemused he is with myopic things; he is not judicious. His thinking is supposedly ridiculous and archaic. Martin in this intimation is captured as infantilised and short-winded. In the authorial intrusion, Marjorie Oludhe comments that "Martin was still in essence the Luo boy he had been when he got married seven years before, whose world picture revolved round an idealised 'home' to which he would return in plenty and comfort after making his mark on the big world" (51).

He is incorrigible; he is fixated in traditional thinking despite the changes sweeping across the continent. Martin desires not to be passed over but stand out and be counted among men. The above description is satirical. As a communicative activity, Humour is used as a spectrum: on one end the concept of masculinity which is incongruous while on the other end the maintenance of gender status quo. This description of Martin is entwined in expectations and misdirection that creates incongruities and disparity from humanity and that are pleasurable. Martin's contribution in the public space is trivialised with his traditional mind set of the private space. It is progression in retrogression. He has not created a mark in the familial space due to his rigidity yet purports to be transformative in the public arena. He is supposedly small-minded, almost childlike in his view of the world. Because of this, Martin's well-meaning efforts to plant his feet on the outer space go hopelessly awry.

Besides, Martin creating a mark in the public space can be interpreted to mean leaving behind his traits in terms of siring children. This captures his infidelity and reckless temperament. He seems to be preoccupied with leaving behind his traits for continuation of his genes so that he does not become extinct. This becomes an indication for achievement; life is not about providence but heredity. Manhood is measured in terms of breeding without taking into account how the offspring are raised. Martin prides in this medieval thinking as a marker of success. For him, the strong individuals are those who successfully reproduce and pass on their traits more frequently to the next generation. Subsequently, their traits become more common and the population evolves. Chance plays a major role; it is a matter of luck. Success becomes a proof that he is most fit in this competition. This perception dispenses with the notion of free will. A person is not fated to whatever station in life his heredity, environment, and social conditions prepares him for but has the individual agency to perform gender differently.

At Christmas, Martin resolutely goes home, taking a dress length for his mother and a tea pot for Paulina, but she is prostrated with a bad period both days and he returns to Nairobi with anger boiling up in him (50). Martin is castigated for being inconsiderate and selfish. He goes home purposefully to see Paulina in person but his wife is having her menses. He fails to take cognizance of that and instead becomes a wounded tiger. Martin's world revolves around sex. Marjorie Oludhe is laughing at Martin here: his amorous insatiable life. Martin is wounded yet he has another woman in Nairobi. He does not hunger for sex but is angry for not being able to demonstrate his manhood. This stems from insecurity; fear of another man having his wife. This; definitely, will portray him as a weakling and a failure yet as a man he must stay at the top of every adventure. Sex is not about connecting emotionally but being the big wheel. A spiteful relationship to home is introduced here. Home is intimately connected to sexuality. Martin seems to operate on the ownership principle of marriage and that sex is competitive and threatening. Martin is supposedly egoistic.

In *Coming to Birth*, Martin, on a Sunday afternoon visit, asks Paulina to look after his briefcase and a box of books while he is on a selling safari. He drops in from time to time to take what he wants. Once in a while, Martin brings a couple of shirts for her to mend and iron. Once or twice he stays the night because he does not feel up to the journey back on the late bus. Within six months he has moved all his things to her room (96). We are amused with the excuses he gives for bringing in his things in Paulina's house. Martin is presumably shameless and unapologetic. Being self-conceited and condescending, he does not go down on his knees and ask for forgiveness as this will supposedly makes him womanish. He quickly forgets that he had denounced Paulina and threw her out of her matrimonial home. He allegedly has entitlement to Paulina's life; therefore, brings his things in piece meals into her house. Dialogue seems to be elusive in Martin's life and pretentiously, he is presumably loaded with justifications for bringing in his luggage.

5.7 Register: Men's Untamed Tongue

Marjorie Oludhe uses language to reflect on broader cultural themes regarding hegemonic masculinity. There seems to be an intimate connection between language and culture. The language reflects the values and ideologies associated with institutions of gender. There is distrust of language as a means of communication. Language becomes a vehicle of conventionalised, stereotyped, meaningless exchanges. Words in *The Present Moment* and *Coming to Birth* fail to express the essence of human experience, not being able to penetrate beyond its surface. Marjorie Oludhe introduces phallogentric and binary language which has a predetermined fixed essence; however, this research singly looks into the male language register as an arena for the denigration of male identities.

In *Coming to Birth* Martin tells Paulina, "Bleeding there may be. Can't even keep a baby for me. Can't even be sure it was mine, can I? Whore! Bitch" (22)! Just like in Okot P Bitek's "My Husband's Tongue," Martin's tongue is presumably hot as the penis of the bee; fierce like the arrow of the scorpion and deadly like the spear of the buffalo-hornet (52). His words are poison to the heart and inflict pain in his wife. Martin is captured as a mental rapist. The verbal rape is meant to make Paulina feel guilty for the miscarriage. Martin performs flirtatiously hence harassment. The conversation sexually objectifies Paulina. The competition to create a mark in the wider society makes Martin a villain. He does not take into account Paulina's emotional fragility. Martin feels inadequate with Paulina's inability to carry the pregnancy to full term. The moment of exasperation is aggravated when he tells Paulina "can't even keep a baby for me" (22). The health of the mother is secondary; his primary goal is to have a child as a transcendent to manhood. He supposedly cares so little of the emotional pain that his wife is battling with but keen at nursing his wounded ego. His sense of insecurity comes out when he tells Paulina, "can't even be sure it was mine, can I" (22)? The fear of the unknown is inherent in the above quotation. His gene should be able to

survive the harsh conditions of the womb to prove that he is a sturdy oak and when it fails then his genetic make-up is feared to be weak. He attempts to run away from the reality that the baby is no more by comforting himself that the child is not his. He does not take into consideration the knife that he stabs deep into Paulina's emotional being. He also calls Paulina a whore and a bitch. Martin is derogative in his speech; his language is foul. The marriage relationship between Martin and Paulina is not bordered on reciprocity but master-servant engagement. Paulina is supposed to be productive while Martin is the beneficiary.

In *The Present Moment*, men's offensive language is normalised. The inhabitants seemingly are familiar with the awful language which in the present moment creates a lot of pain as it reminds the women folk of the past. The distinct language of men is disrespectful and devaluing to women.

The man stopped and roared out a dozen obscenities in English. The words were too familiar to the older parts of Eastern Nairobi to retain much of their original forces...for others they stirred memories which were better suppressed in their present, respected surroundings. (Oludhe 19)

Language itself, in Marjorie Oludhe's view is phallogentric. This research argues that there is room for use of language that escapes phallogentricity: a kind of approach to language that does not impose on the world the rigid hierarchies associated with masculine speech. It is a kind of use of language that escapes patriarchalism of the dominant discourse. There is need to re-assess some of the rather simplistic generalisations that are made about men and their speech styles not only to do justice to men but also to break down the stereotypes that help to keep in place the present unequal gender relations. If one way to do this is to show that there are different versions of masculinity, another is to show close analysis that none of these versions has the monotonic quality claimed for them. Julia Penelope in *Unlearning the Lies of the Father's Tongue* argues that language is dynamic, changing system of words and

meanings and that the dominant discourse is decidedly masculine (19). She observes that creating a more equitable society requires revision of the universe of discourse which includes rejecting the assumption that the categories of language are true and invariant. The words seem to resist erasure. There is need of the kind of linguistic and cultural flexibility in literature that will rapidly move between the distant past and a very modern present.

Just like the colonial masters, men are colonial collaborators. In *Coming to Birth*, Martin supposedly imprisons Paulina within the private space making it hard for her to move to the public arena. Marjorie Oludhe's choice of diction is carefully tailored to denigrate Martin's personality. Martin slams the door behind him, padlocks it, and pockets the key (23). Using active verbs in this intimation, Marjorie Oludhe insinuates that Paulina's free will is caged and her life is controlled by the external force. Martin creates patriarchal walls around Paulina depriving her of her freedom to exploit the outside world. He is allegedly the obstacle to Paulina's ability to transcend the economic, social and political hurdles in life. Martin's attitude is allegedly exemplary of the masculine resistance to the development of the feminine identity, because possessing a strong identity means possessing power as well. Martin is supposedly responsible for the double colonisation of Paulina. Martin locking Paulina inside the house is interpreted as patriarchal circumference built around Paulina to curtail her liberation. Through this action, Paulina cannot access the outside world since her movement is contained within the house. Therefore, when Martin locks her up, he is allegedly creating a barrier for Paulina's emancipation. Language in structure, content, and usage is used to reflect and help constitute sexual inequity. It is prudent to think practically and look locally. The focus should be on specificity and complexity as well as individual's own agency. Marjorie Oludhe locates gender in individual subjects rather than in social relations and processes.

Apart from being chastising, men are vilified as being domineering. Men's officious personality is brought to the fore through Nancy's point of view in *Coming to Birth*. Nancy laments, "But come here, go there, lock up, take care, that was just like being at school" (75). Men's language is marked with dominance. Their over-bearing temperament is destructive to individual's desire to move out of societal confines and restrictions since the system is full of rules of "what to do and not to do" which leads to total subjugation. The use of imperative language presents men as patronising. They are supposed to give women hell which is supposed to be the pillar of manhood. The imperative statements are meant to do little to insure further talk. In other words, men's speech is a marker of finality. Ways of talking and behaving that are associated with gender are a matter not of identity but display. In other words, the behaviour is not a reflection of the individual's nature but rather of some performance that the individual is accomplishing. The category of men's speech is culturally constructed within social groups; it changes through history and is systematically related to other areas of cultural discourse such as the nature of persons, of power and of a desirable moral order.

Another source of complexity is that even within one society, differing cultural constructs of masculinity may be in contradiction and in conflict with each other. The bossy personality is further captured in the dialogue between Martin and Paulina in *Coming to Birth*. Martin tells Paulina, "Lying in bed till now?" he roared, "and no food ready!" "No... You employ me as a bloody coolie to bring you water?" he shouted. Martin is accused of subjecting Paulina to slavery. To Martin, Paulina is a machine who is supposed to serve him. The use of onomatopoeic words (roaring and shouting) is supposedly to instil fear and make him feel in control.

In *Coming to Birth*, Martin's language is marked with ironical undertones. Martin comments about Paulina's supposedly intoxication with M's children so rudely. He remarks

on Paulina's busy routine as "one would think that Paulina is to make speeches and get paid that bucked she is about it. Yet all it meant is more kitchen work and running up to school to pick up the children" (100). Paulina understands him and she says "what he really meant, of course, was 'anyone would think it was your own children you were fussing over'" (100). The usage of irony here is meant to increase Paulina's vulnerability and de-emphasise her significance. It is meant to create pain in her and to remind her of her lack of children. Herbert Colston, and Stewart Lee resonate with Marjorie Oludhe that verbal irony is considered a more male like than female like form of communication (114). Martin's ironical commentary is meant to diminish or enhance criticism, to point out a deviance from expectations and to display negative emotions. The above ironic comment is rude, de-emphasizing, and insulting to a greater extent than literal comment. It is a more aggressive form of talking than literal commentary; more critical and condemning than literally negative remarks.

However, David Graddol and Joan Swann in *Gender Voices* disagree with Marjorie Oludhe's representation of men's speech in both *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment* and argue that discrepancies between men's and women's speech "are differences of degree" (89) and that lists of women's and men's speech constitute a gross over-simplification (89). Representing male language as foul overlooks complexities in actual speech. It is unreservedly erroneous to deduce that men's conversations are for holding centre stage and for getting and keeping attention. Utterance function cannot be placed into a single category or be known in advance. Interactional context affects the extent to which men's speech can be illustrious. This research suggests that to eradicate patriarchy, feminist scholars must move beyond studying gender differences in communication. Focusing on such distinctions rekindles the myth that males and females are discrete, opposing groups which is then mobilized in the service of gender based oppression. This research therefore calls on

feminists to use Judith Butler's conception of gender as captured in her book *Gender Trouble*. Pushing in argument that gender is culturally constructed to its logical unit as Judith Butler does, suggests that gender is not an expression of sex, and can be constructed independently of it. Describing speech features as inherently male overlooks the extent to which context influences the ways in which utterances operate. Gender bifurcation stems from the assumption that gender is an identity which is already formed when conversation occurs. Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* reiterates that the power of language is not only the cause of sexual oppression but also the way beyond that oppression (56).

5.8 Conclusion

Through the use of motif, language register, and juxtaposition, Marjorie Oludhe picks out patterns, stable relationships and specific objects, and then searches for what is the same in the midst of an overwhelming heterogeneity. Gender rests upon shifting sands. There is no gender identity or anything like a pure material substrate that exists prior to these performances. It makes no sense to hypothesize a materiality outside of discursive systems, thus to posit that there is a pre-discursive materiality that cultural systems of meaning inscribe is unthinkable. The idea of pre-discursive reality is only posited retrospectively, by a discourse that constructs gender as a cultural fact and simultaneously posits sex as an ontological fact. Hence, the notion of pre-discursive reality is simply contradictory: reality is discursive so the very idea of pre-discursive reality is incoherent. The traditional feminine qualities and ideals such as emotional expressiveness, vulnerability, docility, dependence, subordination, and nurturance are thought to be incompatible with the masculinity archetype. The differences between the genders in *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment* are perceived innate and unchangeable and feminine qualities should be inaccessible to men in efforts to preserve their veracity. Next, humour and sarcasm have been deployed in the preceding discussion to bring to the fore men's foolishness using both mirth and aggression

respectively. Finally, the insignificance and alienation of men have been pronounced through the foregrounding of female images while relegating the male ones at the periphery through the use of ellipsis.

CHAPTER SIX

THE SOCIAL IMPACTS OF THE VILIFICATION OF MALE IMAGE IN *COMING TO BIRTH AND THE PRESENT MOMENT* BY MARJORIE OLUDHE

6.1 Introduction

Ideology does not simply provide people with a belief system through which they orient themselves to the world, but that instead it plays a much more fundamental role in the process by which social actors create the reality of the world in which they live.

(Mumby71)

This chapter shifts the focus from the manner in which men's lives reflect universal concerns or dilemmas to a more intimate, personal concern with how cultural values, particularly those connected with ideals of masculinity, affect the lives of male characters on a personal level. It focuses on the debilitating effects of the continuous disparaging of the male images in *The Present Moment* and *Coming to Birth* to demonstrate that the glorification of diametrical treatment of gender is not loci of change but fiction of uncertainty. This chapter examines the problems inherent in using a masculine backdrop to articulate the female experiences.

This chapter is subdivided into two sections. The first section deals with the fall of man from grace to grass. This section briefly outlines the constructions of toxic masculinity with an emphasis on its ideals and motivating factors. The analysis reveals the masculine ideals that the main characters strive to fulfil and how these ideals are poisonous for these characters and those involved with them. It also attends to the social and psychological motivations of characters; to chase after this toxic manhood in spite of its costs. The second section deals with the shift to the third space. This section looks at the return of man to the Garden of Eden where each gender looks at one another as the other half which results into a healthier living relationship.

6.2 THE FALL OF MAN: THE COSTS OF MASCULINITY

Almost every form of social change can lead to conflict; the reason being that change dissolves complex everyday set-ups that develop over time in cultures, social strata, ethnic groups, and the gender arrangement. Marjorie Oludhe sets out to bring about this change and succeeds in doing so. Paulina in *Coming to Birth* comes to birth. She is economically, socially, and politically empowered. She rises from naivety to activism. She agitates for the release of Chelegat Mutai and is ready to rally women to demonstrate for the same cause (110). However, under Marjorie Oludhe's influence, conflicts of social change are not resolved but intentionally aggravated. Consequently, the medieval polarity of a world supposedly dominated by good versus evil (where the force of good is women and the force of evil, men) emerges blocking men's path to a better world. The logic of a polarised world is also extended to sexual relations, where men are seen as potential rapists and women as their victims. Ultimately, this way of thinking conjures up fantastic images of 'matriarchy' as the heavenly and 'patriarchy' as the evil power of destiny. This results not only in new freedom for women, but also in discrimination against men, who are having difficulty redefining their role in the light of feminist rhetoric.

6.2.1 Gender Exclusion: The Othering of Men

In *The Present Moment*, a Refuge is established to accommodate women who are weathered with avalanches of problems in life. The Refuge gives them a platform to share their experiences as women and to have shoulders to lean on. It gives them a sense of sisterhood that consequently makes them stronger both emotionally and physically. However, the male characters remain emotionally depressed; not having any agency to vent out their frustrations of life and share their tribulations in the lived lives. They lie in the streets nursing their wounded lives. For instance, the lunatic soldier marches straight up to the house. The kitchen help walks out to intercept him and asks him what he wants. He says that he hears

there is a home for retired officers and wishes to put his name down. He is persuaded that there is no men's home available but still stands surveying the scene and several of the ladies come out frankly to have a look (153). The lunatic soldier is forgotten that he too can share the same miseries of life as the women at the Refuge. The frequent portrayals of men as the perpetrators and oppressors place men like the lunatic soldier on the negative and all efforts both from governments and nongovernmental organisations are channelled at empowering women. The background to these projects is based on unfounded assumption that women are the only people at risk from violence and exuberant individuation rhetoric by classifying all men as perpetrators. The persistence of this gender gap is partly a reflection of the paradigmatic tensions that reproduce what is privileged and what is not.

Correspondingly, Andrea Cornwall in her book *Missing Men? Reflections on Men, Masculinities and Gender in GAD*, resonates with the above argument. She states that in order to come to terms with gender equality; women's empowerment is fundamental but at the same time it is unrealizable to achieve gender equality by focusing on only one gender. She points out that changing unequal gender relations cannot be achieved without male involvement. Andrea Cornwall argues that by opening space for reflections over "taken for granted assumptions" of both men and women offers the opportunity to move from static notions of men and women that pervade different fields in society, such as the development field (54). The placement of the women at the Refuge and the isolation of men like the lunatic soldier from the same seem to suggest that women need to pull away from men in order to become themselves, a scenario that subverts the Garden of Eden myth, as if men will corrupt the natural growth of virtuous womanhood. Both the women and the lunatic soldier ought to be brought into the picture of development and gender issues as this helps to better understand the causes of and factors behind gender inequality and gender power relations. Men like the lunatic soldier are largely represented as the oppressor in relation to the women

in development discourse. By not questioning these simplified assumptions of men and masculinity, we go missing opportunities of change in development issues. We create notions that men and women cannot share concerns and interests, and these do damage the gender relations. Men are defined as homogeneous group and as problematic, the masculine identity that is largely shaped by focusing mainly on the oppression of women. The lunatic soldier like the women is constrained and disadvantaged by limiting gender constructions. Development must consider both men and women's real life experiences and avoid recourse to stereotyped gender roles and power relations. This will promote social justice and further the goals of the Gender and Development. Instead of women's Refuge, centres for families with violent issues can be established. The battered soldier has no space to share his experiences and that probably explains why he behaves like a crazy man. By recognising that both the lunatic soldier and the women can have the same interests then development initiatives will target both men and women and it will be till then that an equalitarian society will be realised.

In *Coming to Birth*, development programmes are founded to target women as their clients. Employment opportunities are opened up but not to all and sundry. Men are denied the privileges to be part of the 'American Dream'. The contempt that the society has toward men is infiltrated into the business field. Amina informs Paulina "I am going into partnership in a small private nursing home. Lady staff. Not all those men poking women about" (145). Paulina nods, amused at Amina's contempt for male skills. Men's skills are undermined. Men are going through double tragedy; they are robbed off the breadwinning status and now employment. In societies based on hierarchy and inequality, it appears that all people cannot use and develop their capacities to an equal extent. You have power if you can take advantage of differences between people. Amina feels that women can have power only if they have access to more resources than the men do. Power is seen as power over something

or someone else. There is valuation of women over men here. Cornwall Andrea espouses this observation further in *Missing Men? Reflections on Men, Masculinities and Gender in GAD*. She says that gender is to a large extent the domain and concern of women. Different strategies that are used for targeting only women in development programmes and projects are and have been successful and are important. She states that too often though, it is presumed that women live and exist as an entity that lies outside the connections of social relations (54). There is need to look beyond simplistic categories as the “problematic” male and the “victimised” woman or the “strong” woman and the “useless” man in a way to better understand the lived realities of men and women. The current crisis in masculinity; therefore, is an opportunity to truly rethink masculine and feminine rather than simply moving the pieces around. Many young and older men are marginalised because stereotypical hegemonic thoughts and attitudes are ill suited for post-modern society. The stereotype presented by Amina in the above description is an important weak point in the whole discourse of multiculturalism. The stereotype comes so handy for keeping the population divided. So while the male gender and its difference is isolated and trivialised, the individual who embodies it becomes inevitably marginalised and will never truly belong. Without an approach to difference that moves beyond static generalisations and works with and from personal experience to open up spaces for change, men continue to be left on the side-lines and remain “the problem.” This partly explains why men throng in prisons and courts. The society is wholly responsible for the rise in crimes in men. The foregoing discussion poses questions about the value of difference and the quest for equity, and the unresolved tensions between these divergent pursuits. Men and masculinities need to be included in development analysis so that responsibility for achieving gender equality falls equally onto both men and women. Development policy which targets women only, particularly in relation to economic

participation, credit, and sexual and reproductive health confers more work onto women leaving men on the margins.

6.2.2 Confusion in Men's Lives

Vitalis, in *The Present Moment*, resorts to violence when his manhood is challenged by Mama Chungu. Mama Chungu tells him, "Do you think your mother may be dying here?" He is still ashamed of running away, "Hey you, do you not think it was your mother who was sent to the hospital for students to practice on, and since she came back she has been worse, heh? My son abandoned me because he is a Muslim and sees it as his duty, but you abandoned her because you are a coward heh?" (153). From this intimation, Vitalis is caricatured for not being manly enough to provide for and protect his mother. His manhood is denigrated and challenged hence he goes through emotion of shame resulting into the use of violence.

As mentioned above, the abuse Vitalis confronts for not subscribing to or fulfilling rigid masculine ideals is a testament to the fragility and insecurity of gender. Given that challenges to a man's masculinity are discourteous, Vitalis hides his insecurity and fear of failure behind a curtain of bravado and stoicism. Vitalis responds to the challenges to his manhood by what James Beynon in *Masculinities and Culture* refers to as "defending male honour" (81). This means that Vitalis who feels powerless and whose masculinity is under threat resorts to violence since it is considered male way of dealing with conflict. He does this in an attempt to protect his honour as a man since macho men are dominant and controlling, and do not tolerate disrespect or challenges to their reputations. To Vitalis, success means communal acceptance; failure means communal rejection. Mama Chungu assaults, insults and degrades him verbally. Vitalis later kills Mama Chungu's grandson who is a medical student to defend his manhood. The womenfolk expect him to be a man as much as they expect him to be gentle.

Besides, Vitalis endures physical and psychological wounds that makes him unfit for complete reinsertion as useful member of society. Consequently, he makes his transition to adulthood with a strong feeling of extemporaneity; his body, which no longer functions as the potent sign of masculine soldiery offered by dominant ideology turns into a contradictory, fractured, dismembered sign revealing the incoherence of the ideology itself. Conditions of trauma are identified precisely in the discourses that equate a certain prototype of masculinity with the normative identity. The inadequacy of such discourse is such felt when the continuous line of victories and triumphal masculinity is unexpectedly and against all odds interrupted, depriving Vitalis of his symbolic transition into hegemonic maturity and; therefore, leaving him unfinished. The felt incompleteness of Vitalis in *The Present Moment* translates into his failure when faced with the social duty of fulfilling his roles as protector and provider within the traditional family unit. The disruption of the line of normative masculinity problematizes the process of subject formation for Vitalis. But far from criticizing men for their shortcoming, this research questions the hegemonic standards of masculine perfection heralded in the two selected novels in comparison to which the male characters define their individual identities at a great personal cost.

The foregoing argument resonates with Don Sabo in *Masculinities and Men's Health: Moving toward Post-Superman Era Prevention* that behind the cultural facade of mythic masculinity, men are vulnerable because of some of the cultural messages sewn into the cloak of masculinity (74). Many males today are confused by the messages they get in relationships. "Be strong." "Be vulnerable." "Be the provider." "I want equality." "I want a 'take charge man'." "Don't try to dominate me." As a consequence, many men like Vitalis cling to old stereotypes in an effort to clarify the situation. If certain ways of being a man are culturally valued, then asking men to abandon these identities altogether without having anything to cling on is clearly unreasonable. But if Vitalis becomes aware that in his own

everyday life he is already behaving differently in different settings without losing a sense of his own identity, then it may be easier for him to recognise some of the implications of 'hegemonic masculinity' without feeling attacked or threatened. The killing can be interpreted as an attempt to save his self. Murder here becomes the ultimate act of self-defence. It is a last resort and resource against being overwhelmed by shame, the sense that he is worthless and his identity is destroyed. The archaic old stereotypical forms are regressively revived and aggression activated. Vitalis gradually succumbs to feelings of self-hatred when he is faced with accusations that he is a coward, a bad person who must be blamed for what is wrong with Rahel and who cannot be expected to be treated with kindness or consideration. This makes Vitalis' identity so vulnerable that it must rely on quick fixes like violence in order to sustain itself, and precipitates violent behaviour by injuring or threatening an already vulnerable identity. Violence becomes the surest, quickest, most inalienable means available to restore or safeguard his identity. A conflict exists because of the cultural imposition of what Bob Connell calls hegemonic forms of masculinity. Individual men internalise all this into their developing personalities because they are born into such a life. They fail to find a path through the thicket of confusing archetypes to emerge and become men.

Also, Vitalis behaviour revolves around a code of martial honour. The society in which Vitalis lives in glorifies military prowess and romanticises death in battle. Typically, such a society rewards men who display bravery by engaging in risk taking behaviours to enhance their reputations and facing certain deaths in preference to accusations of cowardice. This explains why the women at the Refuge tease Vitalis for being a coward which consequently makes Vitalis to kill Mama Chungu's grandson as a marker of bravery. He proudly leaves a medal and one of his boots next to the body. This dichotomy of fame versus shame serves as a carrot and stick to regulate behaviour in otherwise chaotic and violent

society. The fame/shame culture requires Vitalis to deliberately seek the rewards of bravery and consciously fear the social stigma of cowardice.

Furthermore, Vitalis' psychotic breakdown is brought about by his failure as the provider. He no longer has a job. Employment, presumably, provides him with a symbolic battlefield in which he is able to compete for top rank and resources, demonstrate his productivity, and assume inordinate amounts of responsibility and stress. He can show that he is able to take it and be responsible of supporting his family's economic well-being. Vitalis' productivity in the society is placed above his ability to nurture and care for his family and becomes an ideal for which he feels he must strive. The essential message impressed upon Vitalis who is victimised by the cycle of deadly masculinity is that his status and integrity as a man is reliant on his ability to work and achieve. Unemployed Vitalis is regarded as a failed man. Vitalis pays with his emotional and physical well-being out of fear and reality of unemployment. He becomes emotionally disconnecting himself from his loved ones. He shields the impact of his burden with another lethal masculine ideal: stoicism. As a result his pain becomes shrouded in secrecy, forcing him to deal with it internally. Vitalis' main flaw is that he fails to accept anything feminine because there is no alternative to this rigid, impulsive version of masculinity.

In *Coming to Birth*, Joyce's boyfriend plunges into a sea of confusion. He wants to marry Joyce who is a grade two secretary but seems to have his own fears. Joyce tells his mother that he still wants to find his roots before getting married. Amina tells Paulina that she told Joyce "well enough, let's see what roots he's got six months from now" (145). A feeling of insecurity creeps in and blankets Joyce's boyfriend's life. This insecurity implies that he continues to 'play both sides', having no safe home of his own.

In the same grain, Stephen Whitehead in *Men and Masculinities* argues that the contemporary men find themselves caught between a desire to live up to cultural expectations

and changed economic realities in which they are unable to self-validate themselves through breadwinner work patterns (26). To lose one's cultural home or to transgress the boundaries of what is culturally self-evident territory is a painful and anxiety-provoking affair. Joyce is an employed grade two secretary while her boyfriend is jobless. This places Joyce's boyfriend in a conflicting relationship which is traumatic. Lynne Layton in *Trauma, Gender Identity, and Sexuality: Discourses of Fragmentation* argues that trauma is transmitted in conflicting relational experiences and thereafter held in place by emotions such as humiliation, shame, anxiety, love (178). The ambivalence in Joyce's boyfriend who plays both sides involves such fears due to transgressions in relation to both the new class trajectory that he enters and his quest for a new masculinity. In line with Lynne Layton's analysis, these fears provoke anxieties not only about losing his cultural home, but fears of regressing into a position where he might lose his status as a grown up all together. Joyce's boyfriend lives in a culture and society in which gender is no longer taken for granted but a social environment in which it is increasingly difficult for him to understand his social identity and/or social roles. Caught between a macho past and a feminist future, Joyce's boyfriend is not initiated and mentored into a rounded, emotionally expressive, mature masculinity.

Consequently, confusions arise in young males like Joyce's boyfriend as they try to reconcile the traditional masculine values of their fathers, for example, with a profeminist culture that celebrates sensitivity and openness create a crisis in masculinity. They don't know if they are supposed to be new action heroes or differential wimps. Joyce's boyfriend ends up with a fancy hairstyle and a temporary job (92). Social pressures on Joyce's boyfriend and the threats to his status and sense of worth are paralleled by fears that he lacks direction. There is a connection between broad social issues and key educational debates. Steven Biddulph in his text *Manhood* says that men are "in a mess," with "very little sense of

their true selves,” lonely, compulsively competitive and emotionally timid (3-4). The reality for most men in the nineties is that life is just not working. The rules that guide gender relationships no longer exist and men are not oriented to fit the new gender paradigm. Joyce’s boyfriend; therefore, finds himself caught between traditional silent, strong, and austere fathers, who went to work and provided for their families, and the more progressive, open and individualistic generation of their sons. He does not know which of these two very different ways of life and masculine culture he should follow.

6.2.3 Things Fall Apart: A Closer Look at Men’s Health

In spite of health and medical advances, the catastrophe in masculinity might be understood in terms of the negative impact of the social and cultural expectations that are placed on men. The qualities of life of both genders are improved but a society that blames, devalues, and criticizes men and their social roles surely has an impact on their health and wellbeing.

In *The Present Moment*, Vitalis’ failure to provide for his mother leaves him emotionally damaged. It becomes the source of enormous pain because the images are ultimately childhood pictures of omnipotence which are impossible to obtain. Vitalis goes berserk. “The man clanked along the road...after all, a fine figure of a man, crazy or not...” (4). He is confronted with the feelings of inadequacy and lacks emotional space to discuss his suffering. Vitalis is ashamed of expressing his frustrations to his mother as that will make him weak. He makes a habit of parading around the women’s house in an effort to see her but fails to admit that he needs help. Mama Chungu says that he wants to flaunt his condition to the world and so using the foreign language and manners instead of the intimate birth language allow him to divine and assuage his grief (5). The supposedly military paraphernalia tones down the pain he feels in him. He is ashamed to let it be known to his people that he is

a failure. The pain of fragmentation allows him to take an imaginary unified ego for the whole of his being. He is guaranteed not to have to face his pain as he maintains this fantasy.

In the same breath, Farrell Warren in *The Myth of Male Power: Why Men are the Disposable Sex* argues that “the causes of men dying seven years sooner are virtually ignored. Nor are most of us aware of how quickly men’s health is deteriorating” (7). In spite of this dramatic gender difference, there is little national concern, public debate or alarm. The society is changed that there seems to be intellectual dishonesty. It is a society that allows a line of “Boys Are Stupid Throw Rocks at Them” or “Boys Are Smelly.” The designers of this product label will argue that this is not to be taken seriously (ibid). Vitalis is trapped in a “masculine mystique” that narrowly positions him as a breadwinner and protector, and leaves him emotionally weak. Even in his deteriorating mental health status, an alarming bell is not resounded to probe and unearth the deep-seated problem that leads to this madness. He is jeered at and perceived as a lunatic. Feminism lacks a vision of how emotionally healthy love can be transacted from one human heart to the other, from mother to son, from father to daughter, from man to woman and from woman to man. Vitalis suffers from depression.

Moreover, the blanking out of a sense of pain is another way of saying that Vitalis learns to wear a suit of armour that is he learns to maintain emotional distance from those around him in order to keep fighting and winning. It deforms him and narrows his emotional range and depth. It keeps him from the rich connections with others, not just with women and children but other men, which make life meaningful but require vulnerability. The only way to assure respect for difference and diversity is to acknowledge that we are fragmented beings, that no one has the power. Vitalis oscillates between self-depreciation and grandiosity. Good moods alternate with very dark bad moods and each seems to come out of the blue.

Men's health deterioration is visible in their physical appearances and withdrawals. They are not empowered yet the patriarchal dividends are taken away from them. In *Coming to Birth*, "Martin appears at the little house, neat, polite and distant...Martin has lost weight, his cheeks are hollow, his eyes deep and staring... He tells her he has not been home..." (88). Martin is quickly wearing out; he is allegedly used to being a master in his house. He finds himself in a situation where he is supposed to cook and live by himself as the chicken is coming home to roost. Martin finds himself in a territory that he is not used to hence his purportedly patriarchal powers circumscribed. The solitary life is unhealthy for both Martin and Paulina; both need one another to reciprocate their weaknesses and strengths for healthy living. The psychological torture eats away the once robust cutting figure of Martin. The suppressing of emotions leads to emotional dependency. By losing track of a wide range of human needs and capacities, and by blocking his needs for care and love, Martin dampens his emotional common sense and his ability to look after himself. Unmet, unknown, and unexpected emotions and needs do not disappear but rather spill into his life at work, on the road, in a bar, or at home. The very emotions and feelings that he tries to suppress gain a strange hold over him. He buries pain against himself in the form of self-hate, self-deprecation, insecurity, and alcohol addiction. This leads to Martin's physical illness which is clearly captured in his physique. A healthy masculinity should motivate men to find their way in this new world of changed economic realities and work opportunities and to this while remaining themselves.

The constant denigrations of male image promote risk taking behaviours that are harmful to individuals and their social health. In *The Present Moment*, Florence's husband turns to alcohol and the result becomes catastrophic. He, from his drinking sprees, one day comes back home and beats up his wife to death. The accumulated painful feelings turn him into a murderer devoid of reason. He turns to drugs and alcohol to "turn off" or "numb out"

the painful feelings which are hidden and unexpressed. The result is disastrous. Anger is vented in an alcohol-induced rage. Drugs and alcohol are two ways that males like Florence's husband confined by old sex role expectations use to numb out emotions so that they are unable to know how they feel, or to talk about how they feel. Florence's husband fails to live up to the masculine ideals. He is married to a woman whose dowry is not paid and this probably makes him feel less of a man hence he turns to alcoholism.

Similarly, the use of alcohol is captured in *Coming to Birth*, "Martin puts on his best suit and sits steadily drinking beer and getting more and more depressed" (143). The inner emotional conflicts remain imprisoned in Martin not knowing how to let them out. Paulina's comfort, confidence, and acquaintances leave Martin in pain. He is a man who has not achieved anything so far. He turns to alcohol for companionship. His house is shamed for lack of children but his wife is at home. Martin comes to suppress a range of emotions, needs, and possibilities. These emotions and needs do not vanish; they are simply held in check or not allowed to play as full a role in his life for as would be healthy for himself and those around him. He stifles these abilities and emotions because he may be associated with femininity that he rejects as part of his quest for masculinity. He is to perform and stay in control. He is supposed to conquer, be on top of things, and call the shots. He is to tough it out, provide, and achieve. Meanwhile he learns to beat back his feelings, hide his emotions, and suppress his needs leading to depression.

The trauma caused by the denigration of male characters may be fatal. Vitalis' impotence and the subsequent ridicules in *The Present Moment* drive him to kill the medical student. The role and purpose of Vitalis as the alpha male, provider, and protector within the family unit and the community as a whole is obscured and belittled. This leaves Vitalis in a state of alienation from his "purpose" and insecurity over what it really means to be a man.

Just like Marjorie Oludhe, Francis Imbuga's treatment of Ababio in *Aminata* leads to his fatal end. In Francis Imbuga's *Aminata*, Ababio commits suicide after going through a series of disillusionments. Aminata, a medical doctor, opens up the water project for the people of Membe, a tailoring business for Ababio's wife and pays fees for his children. She buys a coffin for her deceased father, a role that is to be played by Ababio (22). Ababio's enormous pain is aggravated by the will his late father leaves behind that gives Aminata ownership of his late father's parcel of land. The pain becomes unbearable and unable to resolve it and as a result, he hangs himself (78). The impotence of both Vitalis and Ababio's lives present them as worthless and inadequate which make them to go through successions of pain. Their lives go through disjointedness and schizophrenic fractures that ultimately lead to death. Feminism; therefore, does little if not nothing in empowering change in the concepts of male role. The social changes create a cultural climate in which the social roles of men become confused and devalued.

Similarly, Sam Keen in *Fire in the Belly: On Being a Man* says, "Ask any man, 'How does it feel to be a man these days? Do you feel manhood is honoured, respected, celebrated? Those who pause long enough will likely tell you they feel blamed, demeaned, and attacked'" (6). The constant debate of the role of men, and increased devaluing and putting down men in public contribute to a lack of social integration for men. The impacts of feminism are not only the social discourse on social equality and the many legislative changes but also the increased sense of social isolation and social disorganisation. These put a lot of pressure on men like Vitalis and Ababio on what they are supposed to 'be' and 'do' and as a result of being unable to resolve the inner conflicts, they resort to murder.

6.2.4 Transcending Patriarchy: Effeminate Weakling Men

Men's social interactions with empowered women are limited. In *Coming to Birth*, Martin habitually comes home late. Sometimes it was overtime, sometimes an evening class and occasionally he comes after the radio stops playing, smelling of beer and not hungry (142). The house or family which as an institution that is to provide warmth becomes oppressive. Martin is allegedly used to the dominant position where he is a know-it-all but with the empowerment of Paulina, communication becomes a thing of the past such that time is spent with little or no discourse. He has no forum to exploit which he could otherwise use to improve his interactional skills. Martin says, "There would have been no end to it except that they both had their work to do, their separate acquaintances. Their time together was limited, their conversation desultory, but always she was the one demanding to grow, to get out, and to do things, and he was tired and disillusioned" (143).

Silas Nyanchwani in his article "The Danger of Feminist Literature" reinforces the above observation and he argues that barely half a century, the tables are turned. By endlessly empowering women, men are being disempowered and that if this is not corrected early enough, a mess is being created. He claims that in urban centres, one can hear loud murmurs that they are no men any more. The current generations being raised are accused of being less of men; devoid of interactional skills and at home with video games, football, and social media (14). Correspondingly, Martin is at crossroads not knowing how to handle an empowered Paulina. As a consequence, he tends to avoid an encounter with her by getting preoccupied with other things. He spends his time either drinking in the bar or reading books. "At one point Martin comes home at the end of the month with a copy of Ngugi's *Petals of Blood*, he who had almost stopped buying books and was sceptical even of newspaper, sits solidly to read it so there were long evenings with hardly a word spoken" (144). Marriage is reduced into a union of convenience with an oppressive air hanging on the rafter.

6.2.5 Against the Tide: Conservatism is Far from Dead

Feminism shakes the supposedly patriarchal foundations that men once stood on. In *The Present Moment*, Rahel says,

The men were very loyal to one another so it's not surprising that I married a soldier too. Many of my father's comrades used to come and visit us at home, and I dare say some were especially picked to look at me and my younger sister. I was a second wife to my man in Uyoma. (Oludhe 10)

The above intimation, on one hand, indicates that the empowerment of women is a challenge to Rahel's father and his friends since their vested interests are in a conservative retention of power. They respond to the massive impact of feminism by coming together to form a 'formidable' force to protect the dividends once accrued to them. They feel vulnerable with nothing valuable to hang on hence as a group they form their own cocoon to lend one another support. It is not masculinity per se that is in crisis, but men who are in crisis because they adopt certain forms of masculinity. On the other hand, the excerpt reiterates the unfairness of patriarchy, this social organisation that provides male with privileges and power while creating an inferior status for females. Undoubtedly, this patriarchal practice of arranged marriage reinforces male supremacy while depriving Rahel of the power to choose and to control her body.

In the same vein, Nekesa, in *The Present Moment* is allegedly beaten up by a policeman for confessing that she is not married because she is a difficult woman. The policeman in the spirit of comradeship takes it as his responsibility to discipline Nekesa for claiming that she is picky (116). Thrown into troubled waters in terms of his understanding of his masculinity, the policeman -who probably finds no affirmation of his masculinity from the new dispensation in society-, becomes desperate to cling onto that which is familiar to him. It is in this desperation to cling to the known that Rahel's father and his friends seek

affirmation from each other and start operating like a close-knit supportive family. The family generates its own codes, separate from those of society; codes that demand the maintenance and respect of one's honour; codes that reaffirm their masculinity. Such survivalist groups of comrades and exiles become violent in an attempt to survive this unfamiliar alienating system within which they find themselves.

Threat to traditional masculinity gives birth to a contemporary dangerous form of masculinity which is built on violence against both men and women. In *The Present Moment*, the need for war is fulfilled by eventually forming a dangerous arm of men. The men who have no need putting off their uniform and determined to fight defeat raid the neighbourhood killing effeminate men. Bessey's son becomes a victim (76). This is a desperate move to revive hegemonic masculinity. These men are desperate to defend masculine and heterosexual institutional preserves such as the military organisations. Men and women appear to have different goals and agendas for the nation. The persistence of hazardous masculinity signals the emasculation of men. Consequently, the young men feel the need to return to more traditional forms of masculinity, and in the face of women's power, adopt exaggerated, hyper masculinised ideals to separate themselves from feminine identification. There is a connection between war and the recapturing of lost masculine ideals of virility and potency. The men are left with desperate choices from which to choose from. They are either to exist in the shadows, submerging their identities or to fight back, proving that they have a self-worth respecting. Neither of these choices is constructive.

Likewise, Wilde Charles in his article "From Racing to Rugby: All Work and No Play for Gogodala Men of Western Province, Papua New Guinea" argues that the rise of women's power due to feminist movement of the 1970's destabilises masculinity. The feminist critique of men's behaviour results in a questioning of dominant forms of masculinity (4). Due to liberation movement, women like Nekesa and Wairimu in *The Present Moment* encroach

upon arenas of social life previously dominated by men, and they have freedom to exhibit qualities that are traditionally only assigned to men. These consequently heighten men's insecurities about how to prove their manhood because the previous definitions and boundaries are disappearing hence forming a hyper masculinised masculinity.

6.2.6 Remake Society: Destroy Family

The second millennium ends with man's claim to a significant role in procreation and child-rearing seriously diminishing. The rise in the number of single mothers in *Coming to Birth* (68) suggests not merely that men are inadequate as partners and fathers but that they are simply redundant. In *Coming to Birth*, Martin's marriage is torn apart and both Paulina and Martin engage in unhealthy sexual relationships for their own selfish interests. On one hand, Paulina gets into a sexual relationship with Simon since it is her 'right' having been denied a married woman's rights and respect (54). The polarisation of Martin's and Paulina's lives (that comes with fantasies) leads to the termination of their relationship because the polarised social world supposedly makes an amicable private loving relationship between him and her impossible. Paulina is made to give up heterosexual relationship which purportedly frees her of violence and dominance. The family seemingly is a site of gender oppression. Martin is a bourgeois; Paulina is a proletarian. This kind of feminist dimension indicts Martin for crimes against womankind. This consequently leads to the disintegration of their family. Paulina is now free to have multiple male sexual partners. It promotes the idea that Paulina does not need Martin to be complete.

On the other hand, Martin enters into series of sensual arrangements in a bid to satisfy his manhood. In all Martin's affairs, no child is begotten. This undoubtedly explains why the development of assisted reproduction, including techniques such as vitro fertilisation, artificial insemination by anonymous donor and surrogate motherhood, together with the highly political and controversial assertion that single parenting is as good as that provided by

two parents, raises the question of wither fatherhood. Once proud of his penis, contemporary man now finds himself being reduced to the role of support seed carrier. Both Paulina and Amina's ability to contentedly and single-handedly provide for Okeyo and Joyce respectively demystifies the myth of fatherhood. Amina becomes a mother through adoption which expands the concept of motherhood while the men are left out in all these arrangements. The foundations of families tumble down with men left as spectators. Reverend Waitito, in *The Present Moment*, accentuates the destructions of families by telling the old women to share with the younger neighbours and make the offering of love since many young people are deprived of the full affection of their families. He says, "The Christian love is always ministering to the present moment, not to past sorrows or future fears" (70).

The debilitating effects are so adverse to the young minds that make them to live in fear. In *The Present Moment*, Jane is frightened of men. She says, "It is like at the beginning of your training going to the mortuary frightens you -all those dead bodies, people wailing outside, you feel sick. But after a while you get used to it and all you feel is that it is cold-so cold. You can do anything you have to do there, but always so cold" (129). Men are recoiled from like vermin making the future relationships at stake. Misandry discourse makes Jane to believe that men as a group are monsters and must be avoided at all costs. Jane lives in absolute fear of the males. The fear of men is so intense that it is comparable to the fear of the mortuary. The images of death come in the young woman's mind when she sees men because of the constant association of men with murder and violence. Mingling with them does not erase these feelings as the images are transfixed into her mind and the feelings of indifference take the centre stage. Even at a tender age, we cultivate and nurture these fears in our children's minds making them believe that the young boys are dangerous and associating with them will not be of any good. By five years old, before children have much conscious knowledge of the world, the building blocks of their gendered personalities are firmly

anchored. Over this skeleton, we build the adult interlocked with sets of stereotypical ideologies.

Similarly, Mama Chungu, in *The Present Moment*, is equally glad, fiercely glad that Robert's two sons are not alive as she would never have been able to trust them. Not only young girls live in fear of having intimate relationships with men but even their own mothers. Mothers like Mama Chungu prefer their sons dead to being alive which subverts the earlier revered position of the male child in the society. Professor Mary Daly in *Realizing the Archaic Future: A Radical Elemental Feminist Manifesto* says, "If life is to survive on this planet, there must be a decontamination of the earth. I think this will be accompanied by an evolutionary process that will result in a drastic reduction of the population of males" (74). The planet cannot survive if the current conception of masculinity endures. The society faces political and economic challenges that cannot be worked out with this old model of what it means to be a man. This kind of argument seems to reinforce a feminist slogan that a woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle. The feminist theory is equality, but the practice is inequality. Women's rights and interests are not necessarily going to coincide with men's rights and interests any more than a couple's interests in a duvet are going to coincide on a cold night.

Women lose the art of homemaking. In *Coming to Birth*, Mr and Mrs M's children spend weeks at home with Paulina as their parents are engaged in politics. "Mr M was away most of the time, appearing suddenly to spend a night and then off again...Mrs M took her accumulated leave and was also away a lot. Paulina kept a list of things they would need to present to her every time she dashed in" (98). The children are being brought up in a family where the parents seem to be all busy and apparently absent. Most of their time is spent listening to their transistor radio or watching television. The liberated Mrs M. does not know how to take care of her home, raise her children, or create the kind of environment that a

husband would love to come home to. She pursues her career at the expense of her family, enchainning herself to her work desk. When she gets a little reprieve through the accumulated leave, she does not spend the time with the children but in politics. This is not to say that women must never work! Throughout history, all around the world, women have worked. There is nothing wrong with this. Nancy Levant in *Perpetrated Vulnerability: How Elites Destroy American Families* sarcastically says that women are free to ignore children by paying more attention to maid-cleaned, spotless, and magazine-cover homes, where no cooking is achieved, no family memories are created and no shoes are allowed to be worn on the white carpet. Women are free to give their children computer software to keep them addictively occupied for years. They are also free to completely ignore the fact that their children are suffering with mean-spirited and incompetent mothers – children who are hungry, starved for attention, and mistreated by non-stop extra-curricular sports regimens, driven through bags of dangerous food, teachers and public school indoctrination camps, completely ignored spiritual needs, and disrespect and contempt of their children’s fathers (40). These are not freedom from gender bondage. These change the fundamental meaning and purpose of womanhood, biological and instinctual gendering. In their increasing assumption of breadwinning, femocratic and skilled worker occupations, women render themselves incomplete.

Besides, when a bomb explodes, Mrs M is only worried of the whereabouts of Mr M and is not concerned of her children’s anxiety and state of shock. It is Paulina who intercedes and calms them down with stories of the coastal jinis. Furthermore, the children are not attended to as the parents value entertaining friends. Paulina is reprimanded for paying more attention to the children yet her services are much needed at the party. Mr M yells, “Children! Good Lord, aren’t they old enough to go to bed by themselves? Now find me some more glasses. Two are broken already” (128). Traditional home making is devalued. Women treat

marriage and children as relatively independent appendages to their lives of full-time involvement in the work place and entertainment. Mrs M. devotes the vast bulk of her time and energy to work and politics at the expense of her children. The qualities that are the most likely to make her a good mother are thus redeployed away from her children and into work place. The children are deprived of those attentions and left only with the hope of finding adequate replacement for their loss. Paulina just like Mrs M is occupied with work at the expense of her family. Martin wakes up with a sore head because there was no one home and had to go and share supper with the cook. He flounces out without saying where he is going but Paulina seems unperturbed as she goes on with her work routinely (129). The family increasingly becomes imprisoning instead of being a small paradise that brings members of a family together. Martin is cast out of his territory like a fish on to a dry sandy beach panting.

The consequence of a society that expects so much from its men yet gives them the least amount of respect is masculinity flight. In *The Present Moment*, Evans, Priscilla's husband, walks out of his marriage into priesthood after two years of marriage without a child. Evans hopes to serve God and be at peace with the self. Even in church, temptations become so high and he ends up fornicating and begets a son Waitito, which makes him disappear without trace. From this reading, Priscilla's husband becomes a fugitive. The humanity of our heroes is forgotten and Evans becomes an expendable muscle in a secular and feminist culture. The family and social spaces become tortuous for Evans. This ejects him out of these spheres into a private sanctuary where he hopes to be appreciated.

Equally, Michael Kaufman in his work *Cracking the Armour: Power, Pain and the Lives of Men* writes that there is a new confusion in the lives of men since the modern wave of feminism in the 1960s that "called into question men's assumptions about power, and identity, about what it means to be men" (5). For Michael, this is a differential era in which men experience contradictions from privilege to pain and to isolation. Men continue to

participate in social life, but he observes that the crisis takes many forms from men afraid of their strength and ability, men who worry that they will not be gentle and caring, men who are afraid they will not be sexually adequate, to men who are petrified that they will be unable to balance the performance-driven model of manhood with that of husband and father (5). There are of course many reasons for the breakdown of the institution of marriage in society today, but this is certainly one of them: feminism makes men shy away from the commitment of marriage, or from the very attempt to find a woman to marry. The young reverend Waitito's consolation to the old women at the Refuge Camp affirms men's world view of Christianity. Rev. Waitito says, "Christian love is always ministering to the present moment, not to past sorrows or future fears" (70). The young Reverend looks at the church and its doctrines as a solace for the troubled souls. Evans is uncertain of the future and his past is clouded with painful images that he can only find concord in Christianity.

6.2.7 Living in the World of Darkness

As women negotiate both the private and public spaces to their independence, the sun goes down and things fall apart on men. Martin in *Coming to Birth* is on the downward trend since his separation with Paulina. He has been moving in with and out of his friends for the purpose of saving but nothing tangible is accrued out of these arrangements. Martin confesses to Paulina that he does not make out very well sharing with men friends- there are always bottles in the house and disputes over the kitchen items and that it would be prudent to move in with her for reasons of security and economy (96). Martin's unworthiness and despair is catapulted by lack of home. He is perpetually exiled in his search for family and forever yearns for safe harbours. Patriarchal home becomes an empty edifice that is bereft of nurturing and fellowship. Marriage is partnership where men and women work together in ways that are positive, progressive, respectful, and healthy. Martin, with the promotion at the firm after getting a certificate, is getting fatter and drinks beer with no signs of dowry

payments accumulating in the post office savings bank. With no financial partner and a broken marriage, Martin's life is in a shamble. He cannot even rent a house on his own as demanded of a married and working man. Life loses meaning and his world is swallowed in alcoholism. He is unable to transcend the social impediments to reach his self-actualisation. Instead of coming to birth, his life is punctuated with disillusionments in the social, political, and economic circles.

The portraiture of Martin above seem to echo Sheila Rothman's argument in the *Woman's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices* that a woman has the job of civilising men -to marry is to capture a wild animal-and to tame society and transform the culture (83). This further authenticates the old adage that says "behind the success of every man there is a woman." The women's world is what keeps the male world from deteriorating. Feminism becomes a storm and a rainbow of social and economic revolution. Partnership between men and women can provide a good basis for the shared interests and constructive relations on which gender justice can be based.

The state of hopelessness is further revealed in Martin's loss of enthusiasm. The earlier gusto he once had to have children thaws. At Christmas time Martin goes home as usual. He does not even notice Paulina's new well-being as he is desperately tired and has had a little too much to drink. He murmurs about hearths and babies but goes back without seeing his wife in person (55). Hardly surprising; therefore, that the arrival of Viagra is accompanied not merely by dodgy humour and gruesome double entente but also by a stampede by men like Martin to get their hands on the latest 'old turkey gizzard' stimulant. In the Viagra era a good number of men like Martin join the army of those bodies whose 'tools' collapse, and need 'fixing'. Meika Loe in *Fixing Broken Masculinity: Viagra as a Technology for the Production of Gender and Sexuality* claims that most doctors and consumers agree that the loss of erectile functioning is apparently synonymous with the loss

of masculinity (29). As male bodies digress from normal sexuality, techno-scientific advances promise to 'fix' the problem, and thus the patriarchal 'machine'. Viagra is thus both a material and cultural technology producing and reshaping gender and sexuality under the guise of techno-scientific progress. This is the implication of the construction of the male body as sexually potent. Martin's masculinity is broken; his tool collapses and is in need of fixing. He lives in a culture that encourages him to think of himself as his penis, a culture that still conflates his sexuality with potency. He loses erectile functioning due to his impotency. Men like Martin who deviate from normal sexuality resort to the use of Viagra which simply perpetuates a detached, unemotional masculinity.

In addition, when Nancy leaves, Martin does not mind. He looks at himself as too old and cynical for a kid like that and is pessimistic to ever have luck with women. He does not feel like it anyway. "Thirteen years since he got married. A wife of thirteen years standing...out of those years, half he had hoped and prayed for freedom-no, not for freedom. Uhuru" (77) sic. Martin goes ahead to question his life time achievements. He says that he does not see himself as maturing, a childless man who cannot keep a wife and whose house at home is shocked (ibid). From the above intimation, the zest that Martin once had is dead. As much as the country is independent, Martin is still colonised. The long awaited *uhuru* is a mirage. It is a figment of the imagination, a monster that reminds Martin of his inability to grow despite political freedom. The private and public space is not fertile enough to allow for productivity. He is barren, barren with a woman's absence in his life to provide and build partnership for development. Martin comments that he had found the idea of freedom as exciting, now he sees it as only the foot slogging of the new world which others were beginning to penetrate with motorbikes and mercedes (ibid).

Martin's disillusionments in *Coming to Birth* culminate into rebellion. He begins to look at the world as being against him. His reactionary effect to the troubles he goes through

is blatant rebellion. He refuses to speak Swahili outside the work situation, impugns the motives of almost everybody in business or politics, and is to be reminded to use the outside lavatory instead of passing water in what is Mr M's private garden. His world shrinks to 'home' and everything outside suffers disparaging comparison, whether the price of vegetables, the behaviour of Mrs M's kids, the weather or the quality of fish (100). With his emotions locked within him, Martin has no platform to vent out his frustrations in life. He seeks audience through rebellion hoping to redress his wounded soul. He wants to be heard and seen without talking aloud his feelings as that will be feminine. Martin suffers in silence but his ego cannot allow him to air his dirty linen in public.

The overgeneralization of men in the cog wheel of violence leads to a plethora of problems. In *The Present Moment*, Samuel who is arrested for the murder of Joseph Baraka Wau (because they had altercation) finds himself trembling as he walks away from the remand. He feels soiled to the skin and is terrified of speaking to anyone before he takes a bath and a pot of tea. He holds out his fare wordlessly in the matatu, afraid of injuring the market women being squeezed so closely against him (152). Samuel is already a condemned man; he is robbed off his dignity and does not have a face. He is hyperconscious of the bodily contact between him and the market women because of the psychological torture and humiliation he is subjected to. He can only be saved by gaining a new identity and the act of bathing can be perceived to be synonymous to baptism in the Christian sense. His ethical values are eroded and his salvation can only come from gaining a new identity. Samuel, by virtue of being a man is presumed to be innately violent. Priscilla tells Mary not to be defensive of Samuel since men are not to be trusted. Both the evil and the innocent ones are bundled together in one basket. The belief that men are armchair rapists make justice elusive and Samuel faces the full wrath of the law indiscriminately. The argument here is that all men are violent and that it is only latent in some. It is skin deep and only requires a little scratch

and the hell breaks loose. The altercation between Simon and Joseph Baraka is presumably enough evidence to convict the former for the brutal murder of the latter. Simon is a Macbeth hence cannot be freed from the vice. This kind of presumption leave men like Samuel battered and emotionally devastated.

Gender seems to be the central organising category of the psyches. It is the axis around which Marjorie Oludhe organises male characters' personalities, in which a distinct ego develops. Henry, in *The Present Moment*, is "a senior clerk, a Christian, a gentleman and a decent person" (102) who loves and provides for his family is metamorphosed to become one of the barbers, one of the arrested, charged and convicted (ibid). He begins to call for bath water and food without being bothered how they are gotten. Sophia even suspects that he takes a bottle (ibid). One may wonder why Henry has no sympathy for or is insensitive to the feelings of a woman he once loved. The answer could probably be that Henry wishes to be accepted by his friends; he also wants to show his community that despite his marriage to a muslim-converted-christian, he has not relinquished his patriarchal tradition. This brings to the fore the inescapability of men's role. Henry initially valued his religious doctrines and family changes and becomes intoxicated with African power.

Henry was tireless in attending meetings. He was talking and joking loudly, intoxicated with the sense of African power, not coming home till he was exhausted with the heat and excitement, calling for bath water and food, hardly bothering to ask where water and food came from in the middle of a strike that left the regular market stinking, the kiosks unmanned, the wayside vendors able to raise their prices at will...She even suspected that he took a bottle or two of beer while planning campaigns with his friends, just now when he could least afford it. (Oludhe 102)

Henry's masculine behaviours shift from non-hegemonic to that of dominance over women. Like a pendulum, Henry sways his masculine behaviour to suit the moment. On one hand, he

shows regard for his wife; while on the other hand, Henry cannot relinquish his patriarchal male privileges. He moves from being a loving husband and caring father to patriarchal patterns of dominance over his wife. An understanding of Henry's contradictory experiences of power should enable us, when possible, to reach out to him with compassion, even as we are highly critical of particular actions and beliefs, even as we challenge the dominant forms of masculinity. This concept can be one vehicle to understand how good Henry can do horrible things, and how some beautiful baby boys can turn into horrible adults. Our biological sex (that small set of absolute differences between all males and all females) does not prescribe a set of static natural personalities.

6.3 THE GARDEN OF EDEN: THE GENESIS OF THE THIRD GENDER.

Martin in *Coming to Birth* comes to a point of self-discovery. Martin realises that remaining at the cornerstone in the wake of change will simply alienate him further and makes a deliberate effort to move to the centre stage. This culminates into a successful and rewarding life which runs against the dominant image. Initially, Martin is seen to be so proud to admit he is distraught when his feelings are out of control. He, having been renowned for his ability and inclination to be drunk, or sexually daring, appears terrified by the prospect of revealing that he can be-and often is- depressed, dependent and, in need of help. It will be said that it has always been thus and that all that is changing and Martin is coming out of the closet. Martin, so this argument goes, having ridiculed, demeaned and patronised Paulina's supposed emotionality, now accepts the importance, the maturity, of not merely acknowledging feelings but expressing them in a civilised and open way. Martin's self-realization is comparable to that of Odysseus's. Odysseus leaves the site of Trojan War as a warrior. As he travels home and undergoes numerous trials, his warrior self is broken down, and he returns to Ithaca with nothing that he starts with, no conquered treasure from Troy or any of his adventures on the journey, nothing except his desire to be home and his new found

understanding of what “being home” means. In the same vein, Martin returns home, not with children he seeks but with new realization about his connection to his wife. Like Odyssey, Martin is stripped down by his trials to the bare essentials and must rebuild himself as something new in order to reach his goal. He represents a process of progressive purification, that is, a movement toward certainty.

Besides, men are pictured as being capable of entering into a relationship where they both give and receive. Fractured Martin, in *Coming to Birth*, reconciles the dichotomy between his internal and external worlds and discovers constructive ways to integrate the discordant elements of his fragmented being into a whole. In so doing, Martin falls into those cracks, those psychic fissures in a form of penance. His subconscious sabotages the facade that has replaced a substantive self which merely permitted its escape. This self who is disoriented, uncommunicative, hexed by loneliness and unresolved conflicts of the past decides to face reality. He liberates himself from the self-constructed prison by allowing himself to be reborn. He redefines masculinity through a model of platonic bonding that represents a safe space away from the sexist demands and gender violence of the larger society.

Moreover, families emerge as essential to an individual’s sense of well-being and identity. Martin suffers from isolation, madness, and loss of self. He eats the humble pie and decides to mend fences with his wife and he says,

All has not been well with us. You know it. I know it. There were women, and none of them gave me a child. You had another man and his child was lost to us. I thought you were only eager now to become a new woman. I will sell the shop if necessary. I’ll tell my people to take me off safari work. Anything. Do you want to move away from here? They laughed until they were tired and then were almost too tired to sleep, overcome with joy, surprise and an unexpected trust. (Oludhe 147)

There is a reconciliatory tone in the above description. As Obioma Nnaemeka in her text *The Politics of (M)othering: Womanhood, Identity and Resistance in African Literature* says that “one does not stand in one spot to watch a masquerade. As with the dancing masquerade, vantage points shift and one must shift with them for maximization of benefits” (5). Martin transcends the patriarchal dogma and moves into the third space where both he and Paulina can be both strong and weak. The familiar couplet “men and masculinities” is broken apart.

An emphasis on plurality and contradiction represents the current state of play in the field. The realisation of androgynous society finally ends the gender trouble that terrorises the humanity. Martin makes an attempt to reinvent and recreate himself out of the discordant bits and pieces of his life. The ultimate aura of strength is embedded in the fertile, untamed images of Martin and Paulina as they look forward to have their child who symbolises hope in gender relations. There is redefinition of home here. There is a creation of a liberating space of home where domestic hierarchies that were once erected are unmasked and dismantled. Martin seeks consensus from Paulina on whether to move out of the house or continue living in servant quarters rather than take charge, and looks for ways of sharing power than seize it. The greater emphasis on gender equality in all walks of life challenges the hegemonic patriarchal arrangement of society. This leads to Martin having to renegotiate his relationship with Paulina. Martin atones for his mishaps and is ready to take up the challenge of being a good father and husband. The caged emotions are at last let loose and the outcome is desirable. From the rubble that remains after patriarchal destruction, a new sexual order is established free of patriarchal pyramid. Martin is able to reveal his soft side and emotions that have been imprisoned in him. His healing seems to occur when he gains feminist consciousness. He stops feeling the need to practice the hegemonic masculine traits and instead embraces the strengths that he can be proud of. This is not a step back if we do value healing, loving, and nurturing traditional feminine qualities. Nevertheless, it creates

disruptions in a way we consider femininity in relation to masculinity and reveals the complex nature of being human instead of solely defining people into gendered ways of being.

Moreover, there is a presentation of marriage built on consensus and reciprocity. Recognition of gender as performance creates the possibilities for multiple masculinities. The existence of contradictory experiences in the aforementioned suggests there is a basis for men's embrace of feminism that goes beyond swimming with change in the tide. Gender blurring in this manner demonstrates the fluidity of identity and its arbitrary connection to biology. Rebuffing traditional structures, Martin demonstrates that true manhood is not a battle of men against women, but a fight of men with women against all that is unjust. The familiar rhyme "men and masculinities" is broken apart. However, Martin gains feminism only when Paulina announces that she is expecting a child. This portraiture is a conservative discourse in the wake of change.

Juxtaposition of Martin's personalities suggests that masculinity and femininity are not clearly defined ways of being; there can be movement between masculine and feminine characteristics which can be admired no matter whether a male or female portray them. Martin, in *Coming to Birth*, is initially the epitome of violence. Martin presumably turns the sweet home into a space that ruptures Paulina's mind, body, and family. However, Martin is able to transcend the temporal and social divisions in order to hold the fragments of his incomplete personhood into wholeness. He gets in touch with his feminine self and recognises Paulina as the other half of himself. Ironically, Martin's transformation happens when he ultimately fulfils the masculine ideal of manhood which waters it down. There is need to envision the possibility of creating a future. In his book *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*, Amartya Sen says "We have to make sure, above all, that our mind is not halved by a horizon" (186). Our rich and integrated understanding of gender depends on the

ability to let dichotomization dissolves as possibilities unfurl. Such a horizon offers a straight forward way of reading the relationship between gender and violence: becoming gendered ritualises violence, predicting who will violate and who will be violated, seeking context merely as a backdrop to what we know.

Besides, the trust that is struck between Martin and Paulina is further espoused when Martin asks Paulina to go to the bank to collect his money. They are married for over thirteen years now and Paulina always thinks that her husband collects his pay in cash at the end of the month and keeps it in pockets and boxes as small people do (1986). There is finally mutual understanding and Martin lets his wife to the secrets of his life. He finally realises that his financial standings must be known to his spouse. He no longer looks at her as an object but a subject who needs to actively participate in his life if they are to forge ahead. He is no longer the wallet but equal financial contributors where financial transactions are done in a transparent manner. Martin redefines and renegotiates his masculinity hence participates in changing masculinities and re-masculinisation.

Both men and women can now choose either to be in town or at home. In *Coming to Birth*, Martin in his journeys home does not suggest that Paulina goes with him. It is her turn to be the town wife (97). Martin seems to respect his counterpart; he no longer determines when and where she should be at any given time. It is worth noting that the restriction of women in the rural place while their husbands work in the cities can be traced to the colonial period in Africa. According to Christine Obbo in *African Women: Their Struggle for Economic Independence*, “retaining women in the village served as a control measure against influx of ‘loose’ women or prostitutes in towns” (26-30) thus women had to be restricted to the rural to prevent them from prostitution which was considered as immoral. Martin realises the comprehension that restricting Paulina to his rural place hinders her emancipation since she may not be exposed to other opportunities outside the home.

6.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, it is apparent that the vilifications of male images do more harm than good in the lives of men as reflected in *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment*. Men are living in a culture and social environment in which the visions, dreams, concerns, pains, health, hopes, and problems of men are disregarded if not minimised. The cultural and social environment changes to the extent that the last allowable act of discrimination is against men. Gender troubles cannot be sorted out through the masculine/feminine paradigm. Gender inclusion should be all encompassing. The binary treatment of gender simply moves the pieces around. It requires a wide-angle lens that takes in all issues ranging from race, status, educational background, religion, culture to age among others rather than attributing gender troubles to patriarchy wholesomely. It is possible to recreate a climate that would celebrate, welcome, and value the lives of men. Above all, gender must be viewed as performance that is performed at variance. Gender is relational and shifting.

Masculinity analysis in *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment* exposes a deeply negative constricting definition of manhood. One of the critical challenges for a re-oriented masculinity is to imagine an affirmative identity. It is also a challenge to give up power, and much of masculinities yet no provision for a clear answer to how that can be achieved. In *Coming to Birth*, for instance, not only is Paulina literally taking over a space which was once the exclusive preserve of Martin, the reversal of roles is underscored by the dependency of Martin upon his breadwinner wife. This newly acquired autonomy is seen to accord Paulina greater level of social independence and privilege, consolidating the fact that traditional familial and social arrangements have been inverted and contributing to a discursive construction of gender that posits female empowerment as intrinsically linked to declining male privilege.

The feminist wave, despite its weaknesses and backlash against it, has a massive impact in *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment*. The fulcrum between the male characters' power and their pain undergoes a rapid shift. Male characters step tentatively or strongly in the direction of change. From the aforementioned, it is crystal clear that the male characters have self-discovered themselves leading to reconciliation; building of trust between the genders; freedom granted to female characters by their spouses and support given to them and, finally fatherhood appraised. However, there is still much to be done to achieve equity. Gender transformation should be on equal footing. It is not only about women but also men. Men should not just be relegated to the support role but should also be made to grow professionally, economically, socially and politically.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

7.1 Introduction

Revise the way men live their lives so that they are free to guide their lives by human ideals rather than restricting them with manly ones. But to change men's lives in such a fashion needs more than just recognition of the limitations and negative effects of our present ideals of manhood. There must also be a recognition and reinforcement of positive alternatives to traditional masculine ideals and behaviours. (Riemer 298)

This study engages with Marjorie Oludhe's *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment* in relation to the denigration of male image. In the preceding chapters, this research looks into the different strategies and modes that Marjorie Oludhe employ in her novels to vilify the male image and the social impacts of the disparagement of the male identity. What are significant in the novels are the negative stereotypical portrayures of male characters, the use of literary devices to vilify the images of men and the debilitating effects of the denigration of male images. As enunciated in the opening pages, the purpose of this study was to explore the denigration of male image in the selected novels by Marjorie Oludhe. This study has examined the denigrating male image through the thematic readings and analysis of the male characterisation. As this research comes to close, it is appropriate that, in light of what the concepts of Queer theory helped this research to uncover, this study attempts to provide answers to the questions raised in the introductory chapter.

7.2 Summary of Findings

The first question concerned the denigrating male image in the two selected novels. The analyses of *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment* reveal that men are known primarily through their relationships with women. In addition, the study reveals that Marjorie Oludhe presents the male characters in a negative light. Their images are disparaged in contrast to their female counterpart. The debilitating male image displays hegemonic

behaviours that represent the various concepts of masculinities which include patriarchy, manliness, sexism and the “big man” status. As fictional characters, they have been cast as manipulative liars, shameless, philanderers, unrepentant cheaters and, therefore, the source of pain in the women they relate with. However, *Coming to Birth* demonstrates what is noble and admirable in men though limited. It depicts, though in much small number, caring and responsible husbands who ironically come at the close of the novel after fulfilling the masculine ideal thus undermining the change.

The second question was concerned with how the two selected novels used literary devices to bring to the fore the disparaged male image. Through the reading of *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment*, the literary devices used in the selected novels are permeated with an internalised ideology that imposes a unified meaning in the whole text: the male characters are degenerates and evil. The natural is imposed upon the language; the very nature of language shows a gap between the selected novels and their imposed meanings. These Inscriptions are inherently phallogentric. This kind of domination blends social and ideological systems which not only validate but also advance a patriarchal power. Through the use of the dominant literary devices, Marjorie Oludhe brings to the fore the concepts of evil versus good as well as construct men’s thoughts and actions in ways which feel normative and compelling, rather than being simply one of potential myriad of choices.

The last question was interested in finding out the impact of the vilification of male image on the male characters in the two selected novels. The male characters created in *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment* are those who seek to achieve idealised images of masculinity in order to acquire or validate their own masculinity which are specifically played out in relation to the female characters in the two selected novels. In this quest they pay severe physical, emotional, and psychological consequences. The above-mentioned observation is reinforced with Michael Foucault in his text *History of sexuality: An*

Introduction, who describes the family as “a complicated network, saturated with multiple, fragmentary and mobile sexual relations,” is a space where the deconstruction of masculinity has dramatic repercussion” (108).

7.3 Conclusions

With respect to objective one, this research concludes that the heralding of traditional masculinity in the two selected novels risks re-entangling the male characters with masculinity and masculinity with patriarchy. The retying of these categorical knots challenges the deconstruction of gender that feminism carried out in the second half of the twentieth century in the name of equal rights and in the name of freeing both men and women from having to conform to rigid gender stereotypes- particularly in the home.

Moreover, the stereotypical portrayures of the male image is illustrative of the Marjorie Oludhe’s perspective as she writes about men and this can supply an outsider’s vision of culture, revealing the implications of the cultural norm of male superiority for the women who are most damaged by it. The two selected novels place an emphasis on the lesser qualities of the male stereotypes that become the measure of what it means to be a man in society. The male gender image in *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment* is informed by the patriarchal discourse that assumes that the gendered image is uniform; fixed and totalizing hence fails to account for the myriad of gendered images. Male characters remain entrapped in “history of analogy” where they are either exorcised or simply represented as part of patriarchal history. In both extremes, male characters’ specificity is denied. The two selected novels invoke gender identity, drawing gender imagery primarily from stereotyped iconography of masculinity and femininity. In this way, masculinity and femininity representations provide a meaningful system of difference which establishes strong limits to the possibilities of male image. If the male characters are not born with masculinity as part of their genetic make-up, then it must rather be something into which they are acculturated.

Furthermore, this research argues that *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment* are replete with male stereotypical image which is used as a foil to articulate the female experiences. What in the present novels under study is written off as “the male gender image” is best seen as hegemonic masculinity, the culturally idealised form of masculine character which; however, is not the usual form of masculinity at all. Also, borrowing from Catherine Acholonu’s argument in her article “Buchi Emecheta.” this research concludes that Marjorie Oludhe “overstepped her bounds in her portrayal of male characters in exaggerated state of idiocy, irresponsibility and insensitivity which reduces the plausibility and reliability of her point of view (13).

If gender is a historical product, it is open to historical change and that change is to become conscious, and open to democratic control, we need to know how gender is shaped and how it may be reshaped. *The Present Moment* and *Coming to Birth* take gender as a social mould whose mark is imprinted on the child so that masculine personalities are turned out from the conveyor-belt like chocolate frogs. Gender is represented as what does not change; the stable natural pattern underneath all the flux. This woefully underestimates the energy, the activity, the agency of a growing person.

Objective two concludes that *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment* do not only use the dominant aesthetic tools to distort the stereotypical female image but also to assert the stereotypical portraiture of male image. This point is echoed by Sara Mills and Louise Mullany in *Review Language, Gender and Feminism: Theory, Methodology and Practice* that the literary devices employed in feminist novels enforce and naturalises a gendered and heterosexual social and moral order (206). The analysis of language in the selected novels; therefore, confirms that Marjorie Oludhe demonstrates credible and purposeful consistency in her use of the dominant literary devices to portray male characters, the vilified male image and meaning effectively. The study has proved that Marjorie Oludhe’s use of language is

functional. Language has been used to articulate the feminist ideologies that have subsequently led to the vilification of male image.

The Objective three closes that the crisis in masculinities in *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment* reflects anxieties of African men regarding their identities, tensions rooted in the dehumanising treatment that is accorded to them in gender space, and the continued debasement directed at them through individual and structural discriminations. This point is driven home by Judith Butler in *Bodies that Matter* who writes that gender norms are “continually haunted by their own inefficacy” and therefore there are constant efforts afoot “to install and augment their jurisdiction” (237). Consequently, the two selected novels have to a large extent fallen short of representing positive change on the part of male characters hence a need for revision.

The deconstruction of the female gender, also, allows us to think beyond gender which in fact ushers back in the straight male as the normative subject. The deconstruction in the two selected novels has created a condition of anxiety or crisis. The crisis is arguably brought about by Marjorie Oludhe’s framing of gender binaries.

One conclusion is inescapable: men and women both have a lot to learn from being seen through the lens of the other.

7.4 Recommendation

For objective one, this study argues that in order to enrich analyses of a myriad of gender productions without sacrificing the ability to look at women’s oppression, the present analysis recommends retaining certain aspects of gender conceptualization and ditching others. This research says that conceiving of gender as under constant construction helps demystify and thus disrupts the binary gender system which naturalises patriarchy. The concepts of gender thus need retooling which entails thinking about gender as continually constructed. Besides, this study proposes an overall re-reading of the images and ideals of

masculinity in African literature. This will allow us to look at various, sometimes inconsistent ways in which a person presents gender. The complex relationship between embodied reality and cultural influence that interact to produce masculinity is uncertain and thus the need to place emphasis on the multiplicity, changeability, and fluidity of maleness. It is this necessity to become chameleon-like that there is need to shift and transform one's identity in order to adjust to the given discourses that open up space for subversive confusion which ultimately leads to dissociation with the hegemonic order.

Moreover, the idea of performative character of gender is; therefore, prudent. This leads to a strong emphasis on discursive constructions of male image. Gender is discourse and when it is viewed this way, it leads to emphasis on the fluidity, instability or provisional character of gender identities as different discourses intersect and characters move between them. Gender arrangements are complex and change eminent. The two selected novels fail to look at the contemporary world as a mosaic of separate cultures. Moving toward gender equity requires a shift from a gender consciousness built on dichotomy to a gender consciousness built on diversity and reciprocity. Gender is not built on a tight rope but revolves around diversity and authority. The authority is the social actor, the self, endowed with innate powers to diversify in terms of gender performance.

For objective two, this study instructs that there is need for a bridge between feminist and post-feminist divide in gender and language studies; one that recognises diversity and the need to understand and promote awareness of the pervasively ideological nature of language and discourse in the areas of gender and sexuality. As Oliver Maria suggests in this respect, literature should try to transgress the "limits between the world and the text" (24), learning to view:

The text as a social phenomenon and an ideological act that participated of life through language. Although we can't assume a direct correspondence between reality

and the way it is represented by the text, we can certainly argue that there is a relation between the text and the socio-historical reality in which it is being reproduced and read. It is in this ways that texts interpret, problematize and/or mediated reality that their political and ideological function may be discerned (12).

The literary devices; therefore, should be deployed to penetrate beyond the surface. It is only through this that the text will be a clear representation of the socio-historical reality. The literary devices breathe life in fictions and as such should not be viewed not only as aesthetic tools but also a function of social values that is reflective of the world reality.

In objective three, this research recommends that the way to achieve equity is to include all analysis, however difficult or uncomfortable and it must be equity for all. The females' new self-empowerment cannot come at the exclusion or to the detriment of others. There must be intentional rejection of separatism, thereby encouraging men, and women to create communities that foster a wholeness which transcends gender, class, and racial lines. There is need to think of masculinity as a project pursued over a period of many years and through many twists and turns. Such projects involve complex encounters with institutions and cultural forces. These encounters have a dialectical structure, not a mechanistic one. A society that this research envisions is that which bodies and personalities in our post gender future will no longer be constrained and circumscribed by gendered traits but enriched by their use in the palette of diverse self-expressions. Since a man's self-esteem is intrinsically linked to his phallus, the male characters' perceived inadequacies in *Coming to Birth* and *The Present Moment* result in feelings of personal inadequacy and shame, such doubts create sexual anxieties.

The social impacts of the vilification of male image also demonstrate that; although, the two selected novels depict men behaviour negatively, they also recognise that men are themselves victims who need to be liberated from patriarchal expectations within their

societies. This means that both men and women need to work together as suggested by Richard Bjornson in *The African Quest for Freedom and Identity*, who points out that: “men as well as women need to realize that...prevailing social institutions must be changed if Africans are ever to enjoy the fullness of their humanity” (389-390).-

It will also be prudent for future researchers to unravel the representations of boyhood in children literary texts in order to understand men and masculinity profoundly. Furthermore, boyhood is also marginalised in gender studies making it a fertile ground for analysis. In *The Boy*, Greer Germaine resonates with this observation and argues that “the boy is all but elided in the various descriptions of manhood in the making which tend to present him as an incomplete man, and entertain no suspicion that the finished man might be an incomplete version of the boy” (33). Boys are both volatile and vulnerable: at higher risk for suicide, reckless driving, drug experimentation and committing or being a victim of violence. Flood M., Gardiner J., Pease B., and Pringle K. in *International Encyclopaedia of Men and Masculinities* resonates with Greer Germaine, and they say that certain explanations for why boys are in trouble appeal to essentialised ideas of boyhood, positioning them as newly disadvantaged by the gains of feminism (20).

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