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INTRODUCTION

> *"Can the subaltern speak? What must the elite do to watch out for the continuing construction of the subaltern? The question of "woman" seems most problematic in this context."[1]*

> *"Power may circulate through all members of a society, but there is a difference between those who are relatively empowered and those who are relatively disempowered."[2]*

In the light of the works of three celebrated women writers of the African continent, *The Joys of Motherhood* by Buchi Emecheta, *Nervous Conditions* by Tsitsi Dangarembga and *Changes: A Love Story* by Ama Ata Aidoo, written between 1979 and 1991 in order to reveal colonialism and its aftermath from women's perspective, the aim of this study is to examine the problem of representation of Third World Women caused by colonial patriarchal discourse and post-colonial male-dominated literature/theory. In addition, based on the fact that feminism can vary

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[1] Gayatri C. Spivak. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. (Eds.) Nelson& Grossberg, Hampshire and London: MacMillan Education, 1988:294.

[2] Jenny Sharpe. *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of the Woman in the Colonial Text*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993:9.

regionally, the study unveils the diversity of the African continent, women's struggle to become subjects, and the problem of gender and female identity in the light of feminist and postcolonial feminist approaches. Considering the process that evolved from colonial patriarchal discourse to postcolonial African women's literature and discourse, the African women's survival in a sexist-male-dominated society - in the light of classist and racist concepts - their struggle to have identity, to be subject in a patriarchal society under the influence of colonial ideology are examined.

Postcolonial theory appreared as a result of the failure of Eurocentric theory to cope with the diverse cultural sources and complexity of postcolonial writing. According to Ashcroft, European theories themselves emerge from particular cultural traditions which are hidden by false notions of 'the universal'. (Ashcroft, *Empire Writes Back* 11) Postcolonial studies have recently (especially in the post-1980 period) been studied in various academic fields as part of cultural studies, theoretical and intellectual resistance to colonial ideology and discourse (knowledge). Despite the end of the colonial era, the concept of post-colonialism is still debated, as indirect political control through military and economic power dominating the world. Aschcroft et al. use

the term postcolonialism to refer to the expansionist process as a condition that affects the whole culture, from the beginning of colonialism to the present day. The 'colonized' communities that survived colonialism embark on a process of re-establishing their own order, identifying the misrepresented images imposed by colonial discourse and producing their own representations (2). Furthermore, as Arif Dirlik asserts "the postcolonial process coincides with the period when Third World intellectuals have arrived in First World academe." (329)

Although feminism and the postcolonial movement are similar in their points of opposition, both have forgotten some points. In this respect, Deepika Bahri emphasizes that "while feminist perspectives are blind to issues pertaining to colonialism and the international division of labor and postcolonial studies also fails to include gender in its analysis." (201) In this context, feminist and womanist studies, especially those that trace their ties to previously colonized societies, have criticized colonial and postcolonial works for not giving enough place to women and reflecting them in the framework of repressed images, despite the support and service they provided in the nation-building process and despite the fact that they were subjected to double

colonization by colonial ideology and patriarchal structures. Similarly, Anne McClintock argues that "colonialism or capitalism has been women's ruin, with patriarchy merely a nasty second cousin destined to wither away when the real villain expires. […] Nowhere has feminism in its own right been allowed to be more than the maidservant to nationalism." (*Imperial Leather* 386)

Accordingly, this study explores power, ideology and gender relations through postcolonial feminist/womanist approaches in contemporary colonial and postcolonial contexts. Postcolonial women's literature, particularly African feminist/womanist approaches, have sought to foreground female characters who have been inaccurately portrayed for ideological and political purposes. In particular, postcolonial feminist/womanist critiques of anti-colonial nationalist discourses help to focus on how female characters are sacrificed to ideological positions for the sake of national and patriarchal interests in historical contexts and concepts such as the 'gendered nation', 'motherhood' and the 'family'. Postcolonial women literature also unveils and problematizes the disruptions, discriminations and othering/excluding attitudes that give shape to the background of colonial discourse, postcolonial patriarchy and White, Western Feminist discourse,

as well as question marks about the social condition of the colonized Third World, Black women. The colonized Third World and African women are repsented within a limited portrayal on the basis of racist and sexist prejudices in both male-dominated African literature and Eurocentric academia.

It is, therefore, not surprising that Black women rejected the feminist doctrines expressed by White women as inadequate and incompatible with them. As a result, African women, first in North America and Europe, and later in Africa, sought a 'feminist attitude' that was appropriate for their own structures and cultures. As a result of this search, Such new approaches/trends in gender studies as 'Black Feminism', 'Womanism', 'African Feminism', African Womanism' and 'Third World Feminism' have come to the forefront.

The main aim of Black/African Feminism is not to overturn the patriarchal structure. Rather, it endeavors to purge it of all the pitfalls that can threaten the well-being and success of all Black people. However, as prominent Black feminists began to identify with 'Third World' women in the 1980s, and as their perception of 'race' and 'class' based prejudices in the mainstream feminist

movement increased, they sought a concept that better characterized their unique identity. In this direction, Alice Walker coined the term 'womanism' instead of 'Black Feminism' and 'women of color movement'. Some of the writers who had problems with the term 'feminist' and could not fully express themselves with this term are Flora Nwapa, Ama Ata Aidoo, Buchi Emecheta and Tsitsi Dangarembga.

In this study, it is necessary to know the factors that led to the formation of the texts to be analyzed and the historical chronology that led to these factors. Therefore, in the first part of the study, it is important to be aware of the feminist and womanist theories that emerged on the scene after the 1960s, including African women's literature and Third World African women, in order to understand the women-themed study. Nevertheless, before Focusing on approaches prioritizing the problem of women and gender, a detailed discussion of the colonial patriarchal discourse having created the conditions for the problem of representation of postcolonial/third world Women and the postcolonial male-dominated literary examples and approaches that emerged in response to this discourse is prerequisite for establishing the cause-and-effect link between the arguments emphasized in this

study. In the first part of the study, after describing colonialism and colonial discourse, colonial and postcolonial male-dominated texts are analyzed in the light of the views on colonial discourse discussed by postcolonial theorists and writers such as Fanon, Bhabha, Said, Thiong'o and Achebe. Then, in order to focus on gender and women's identity, which covers the main part of the study, the process of the gendered understanding in the West is emphasized in a historical context through the views of Western women feminists who first emerged in the West in terms of gender and women's movements. The contributions of prominent women figures such as Wollstonecraft, Woolf, De Beauvoir, Millet, Friedan to the feminist movement and theory are discussed.

After the second wave of feminists in the 1960s and 1970s, who aimed to examine the representations of women in male-dominated literary texts and to reveal the originality and freedom of women's writing, in the 1980s, especially Third World, non-White women critics/theorists who found the scope of literary texts and representations in which middle-class, White women were at the forefront exclusionary and inadequate, and who were outside the dominant female identities (white-middle-class-

heterosexual) and raised their voices are examined. In the Third Wave, led by important Third World women figures such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Chandra Mohanty Talpade, Bell Hooks, Barbara Smith, Elaine Showalter, Hazel V. Carby, women developed new conventions and representations to express themselves. Intermingling post-structuralist, psychoanalytic and postcolonial theories with feminist literary studies, the study discusses how feminist criticism has been transformed through Black and "Third World" feminist approaches, challenging early feminist criticism and developing distinct postcolonial perspectives. The last part of the first chapter examines how African women's representations are reflected in African women's literature, which aims to define itself by highlighting its own cultural characteristics and diversity, on the basis of women-centered theories such as Alice Walker's 'Womanism' Ogunyemi, Chikwenye Okonjo's 'African Womanism' and Clenora Hudson-Weems' 'Afrikana Womanism', inspired by the Third World.

In the second part of the study, through the double colonization to which the character of Nnu Ego is subjected in *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979), Emecheta effectively reflects the unstable, and gendered identity of women in the colonial

and postcolonial period in African society, based on her dissatisfaction with the situation of women in Igbo culture, which she generally opposes in most of her works. Considering the importance of the institution and role of 'motherhood' in Igbo and African culture, Nnu Ego's struggle to develop a female identity through motherhood and thus to become a subject in the patriarchal Igbo and colonial space are emphasized.

In the third part of the study, Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988) focuses on the conditions that oppress and limit women in class, sexual and racial dimensions due to traditional patriarchal approaches in Zimbabwean society that has not yet recovered from the 'colonial' order. However, through the new generation of female characters such as Tambudzai and Nyasha, the study examines the escape of a woman who opposes both the colonial order and the patriarchal order it reinforces, who aims to change herself, her family and her society, and who at the same time is subjected to 'nervous conditions' between submitting to the 'superior culture' reflected by the colonialist-run educational institutions and keeping her own culture alive, in order to gain an identity and, especially for Tambudzai, her promising journey of development.

Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes: A Love Story* (1991) reveals the contemporary African woman's search for female identity and her struggle to survive by resisting the gender roles imposed on her in the neo-colonialist social order, within the dominant male-dominated structure in 1990s Ghana, where dreams of freedom are shown as lies through the eyes of the author, with the character Esi.

In the concluding chapter of the study, the negative/corrupting outcomes of the colonial experience on Africa's diversity, representation and African women, and how these outcomes are first represented in colonial and postcolonial literature through the eyes of male writers are explained. Then, as a result of the representation problem of Third World women, it is compared how the postcolonial African women writers, in the study, reflect the female characters' search for identity and their efforts to become subjects in their works. In the light of theories that approach the diverse African women's literature on a more concrete and local basis, the extent to which the three novels reflect the representations of Third World African women and the diversity of the literature in question is synthesized.

CHAPTER I: FROM COLONIAL PATRIARCHAL DISCOURSE TO POSTCOLONIAL AFRICAN WOMEN LITERATURE

The British Empire maintained an empire of unprecedented power in many corners of the world until its dissolution after the Second World War. Undoubtedly, imperialism and colonialism were the two key elements that kept the empire afloat. Elleke Boehmer defines imperialism as "the domination of an empire over another territory by military force" and colonialism as "a process that strengthens the empire and thus reinforces imperialism". (2) Imperialism and colonialism, which are based on economic reasons, have naturally brought along their own culture. Edward Said argues in *Culture and Imperialism* (1994) that "The universal expositions of the nineteenth century were intended as microcosms that would summarize the entire human experience past and present, with projections into the future, […] also signified the dominant relation of power. […] The resulting hierarchies portrayed a world where races, sexes, and nations occupied fixed places."

(120) Leading literary figures of the nineteenth century, such as Rudyard Kipling and Joseph Conrad produced their literary works based on the representation of the non-European, non-Western figures, in European culture at the time, as "the primitive, or at least different but certaily weaker and less-developed." (56) As seen, the Empire was maintained by constructing an order based on a binary opposition between the Empire and the rest of the world.

In Kipling's short story "The Man Who Was" (1891), which reflects the White Man's Burden[3] and the socio-economic purpose of the empire in the plot or characters of his works, the depiction of the meal arrangements of the imperial hussars in India is also important in terms of emphasizing the imperial order there. (Khanum 175) Noel Annan mentions that "the moral reach of a society can be unraveled without traditional

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[3] In 1899, Rudyard Kipling published a poem entitled "The White Man's Burden: the United States and the Philippine Islands". In the poem, Kipling suggested that the United States should take the burden of Empire, as Britain and other European countries had done. For this reason, the poem "The White Man's Burden" is interpreted as a celebration of imperialism that reflects a discriminatory mindset. (See. Kipling, Rudyard. "The White Man's Burden: The United States & The Philippine Islands, 1899." *Rudyard Kipling's Verse: Definitive Edition* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1929).

and sacred objects." (cited in Rutherford 101) From this point of view, Kipling underlines that the British Empire is a sacred object and claims that the opposite would lead to chaos. Therefore, the most important aspect of the empire's long-lasting influence in the colonial process and its aftermath is that it maintained an order of binary opposition based on its transnational dominating power. Polarization is essential in colonial literature, in which indigenous, colonized cultures are portrayed as "hearts of darkness" affirming Western superiority. (Treiber 85) Abdul Jan-Mohammed describes the culture, discourse and codes of colonial literature as "diverse but interchangeable concepts such as white and black, good and evil, superiority and inferiority, civilization and savagery, reason and emotion, rationality and sentimentality, self and other, subject and object." (82) In this order of binary oppositions, the colonized were considered to be the "other" and the colonial power labeled and otherized the people it wanted to rule with different discourses. The term 'other'[4] has been

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[4] The other is, in a general sense, another person who is separate from one's self. Considered as the exploited subject, the other is used to affirm the colonizer/colonized relationship under the influence of the exploiter, such as 'primitivity' and 'cannibalism'. It is frequently used by Sartre in the context of existential philosophy. There is an

used to refer to the relationship between the self and the other in terms of identity and self-reliance.

The concept of the "Other", which is frequently emphasized in postcolonial theory, is based on the work of psychoanalyst and cultural theorist Lacan. According to Lacan's theory, the "other" who is marginalized and exploited by being defined by its difference from the center and the "Other", given identity in the subject's gaze, are very useful in understanding the colonizer-colonized relationship in colonial theory. "Othering", an undispensable concept in this relationship, is a term coined by Gayatri Spivak and used to describe the process by which colonial discourse creates its own side and 'others'. "In Spivak's account, othering is a process in which opposites are in a relationship because the colonized "others" are produced as subjects while the colonial "Other" is simultaneously created." (Ashcroft 156) Understanding the concepts of other and othering is extremely important in

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ambiguity in Lacan's theory of the other and its application to postcolonial theory. Ashcroft attributes this ambiguity to the fact that both processes of othering occur simultaneously and the colonized subject is represented both as a child of empire and as a primitive and degenerate subject of colonial discourse. (See. Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. *Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts: Second Edition*. London: Routledge, 2007. 154-6.

understanding colonial discourse and postcolonial theory.

Postcolonial cultural theorists have examined the processes of othering in colonial discourse and developed postcolonial theory and discourse by examining the ambiguity in these discourses. Theorists such as Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, who grew up in countries with a history of colonialism, have developed postcolonial theory by challenging the othering methods of colonial discourse. Arif Dirlik answers Ella Shohat's question "When exactly does postcolonialism begin?" (Shohat 103) as "When Third World intellectuals enter the First World Academy" (329). The entry of figures such as Said, Bhabha and Fanon into the academy marked the beginning of the postcolonial period in chronological and epistemological terms.

As a term, "postcolonialism" refers to the end and aftermath of the colonial process, due to the prefix "post", which denotes finality. However, it has been used by many critics to refer to "a whole culture that has been affected by colonialism" (Ashcroft 2) "the consequences of colonialism" (Innes 2) "various forms of representation and systems of reading" (McLeod 5) from the beginning of colonialism to the present

day. Ani Loomba agrees that "postcolonialism" should not be understood as a historical process, arguing that it is more useful to understand it as "the denial of colonial domination and the legacy of colonialism" (Loomba 16). Stuart Hall, on the other hand, reminds us that the term postcolonialism has both a chronological and an epistemological dimensions.

Many authors agree that the reason why colonialism has lasted for so long is not only because of the use of weapons or other forms of force, but also because culture has been very influential. Celebrated writers such as Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha and Frant Fanon, having pioneered the understanding of postcolonial theory, explain in different ways that colonialism asserts a worldview that justifies the submission of the colonized to the "superiority" of the colonial power. While Said claims in *Orientalism* that the West dominates the East with its knowledge systems, Fanon argues that the racial difference between the colonizer and the colonized is a reason for colonial activities. Bhabha, on the other hand, scrutinized the angelic identities and cultures that emerged at the point of interaction between the colonizer and the colonized and challenged the colonial discourse. In his book, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, John McLeod argues that

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colonialism is perpetuated by making people in the colonizing nation justify the idea that it is right and proper to dominate others, and by making people in the colonized society accept their inferior position in the colonial world order. (16) Describing this process as "the exploitation of minds", McLeod argues that it works by "persuading people to internalize its logic and speak its language; to convince them of the values of the colonial power in how they perceive and represent the world" (18).

From 1977 onwards, the Marxist Kenyan postcolonial writer/theorist Ngugi wa Thiong'o, who gave up writing his novels in English and continued to write in Gikuyu, draws attention to the importance of language in colonial discourse and its impact on culture in his *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. Describing the times when he was forced to speak the language of the imperialist powers, Thiong'o writes: "In my view, language was the most important tool for power to mesmerize and enslave the soul. While bullets were the means of physical subjugation, language was the means of spiritual subjugation." (Thiong'o 9) Drawing attention to the mutually reflective and constitutive relationship between language and culture, Thiong'o emphasizes that language is

intimately connected to people's relationship with each other and with the world.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o differs from Achebe on the relationship between language and culture. Achebe believes that because of the multilingual nature of African communities and the presence of English on the continent as a result of colonialism, national literature in Nigeria and many other countries in Africa should be written in English. Achebe thus calls for the hybrid creativity of African writers who shape the English language according to their own experiences:

> […], but I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings. (Achebe, *Morning Yet on Creation Day* 103)

Achebe believes that this reproduced language, which is an adaptation of English to African culture, can, if given the opportunity, overthrow the dominant English language. Achebe defends this view based on the idea, also defended by Bhabha, that if the colonial authority allows for anti-colonial subversion, the reproduction process can be a mistake.

In response to Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o claims that there are many connections between language and culture, and that colonialism, by using language, also undermines culture. According to Thiong'o, "The literature it produced in European languages was given the identity of African literature as if there had never been literature in African languages. Yet by avoiding a real confrontation with the language issue, it was clearly wearing false robes of identity." (*Decolonising* 22) Thiong'o initially accepted that this literature is part of the "great anti-colonial and anti-imperialist upheaval" all over the world. (*Decolonising* 21)

As seen, Thiong'o states that the most productive work for a society is the structure that prioritizes and reflects the culture of that society. As a result of his respect and importance for the cultural values he belongs to, he brought up for discussion in his speech at the 42nd meeting of the Faculty of Literature at the University of Nairobi in 1968: "We have argued the case for the abolition of the present Department of English in the College, and the establishment of a Department of African Literature and languages. This is not a changes of names only. We want to establish the centrality of African in the department". ("On the Abolition" 441) As understood, language is the

carrier of culture, and culture contains a whole set of values that enable us to perceive ourselves and our place in the world, especially through oral and written literature. The way people perceive themselves affects their culture, politics, the social production of existence, and their perspective on nature and other beings.

Edward Said draws attention to the importance of literature in colonial discourse and postcolonial theory. In *Orientalism* (1978), which is considered one of the most important works of postcolonial theory, Said, who examines East-West relations, argues that the notion7 image of 'Orientalism' developed in parallel with the imperialist movements of the West. Said claims that the West "gained power and identity by using Orientalism."(3) According to the characterization of the West, which holds power and knowledge, the East is depicted as "irrational, seduced, childish, different; while the West is depicted as reasonable, virtuous, mature, normal." (40) While Said leans towards colonial understanding by basing his views on the binary opposition of East and West, he bases his views on the discourse he created based on Foucault's view that "expressions spread over time in different forms form a unity if they are connected to one and the same object". (46) The concept of Orientalism has led to the

production of knowledge about the East in relation to the West's 'desire for knowledge.' This formation of knowledge is the result of the West's superiority over the East." (Childs and Williams 100) However, the knowledge that emerged with this superiority paved the way for the West's colonial activities on the East. Stating more on the impact of colonialism on culture, Said argues that orientalism is a discourse and system of knowledge that the West has created about the Orient in order to justify its colonialism. Said has added a new dimension to postcolonial studies by claiming that colonialism is a discourse that reflects the relationship between knowledge and power, especially in light of Foucault's theory of discourse. Said emphasizes that literary texts, especially novels, are one of the most important factors that create a discourse.

The binary opposition, having led to the West that established a relationship of dominance, considered to be a cultural discourse, is the black-white opposition and the concept of 'race' foregrounded in cultural studies. Ashcroft, who touches upon the importance of race in the high impact of colonialism and its discourse, emphasizes that this separation of humanity is extremely necessary for colonial powers to

establish dominance over people and societies and to justify their attempts. (*Key Concepts* 180-1)

Having introduced highly celebrated and pivotal works on colonial discourse, Frantz Fanon reveals the destructive and dehumanizing psychological effects of racist discourse in exploited societies in his works *Black Skin White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). The West's use of black people's skin color, that is, their race, as a discourse in civilizing them has led to a great psychological existential confusion (Fanon 10) that Fanon tried to overcome by analyzing. *Black Skin, White Masks* tells how the gaze of the other, the gaze that prevents the black man from being recognized as a man among other men, questions the existence of the black man. (110) In the section "The Fact of Blackness" of his work *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon mentions that the individual in the position of being an exploited object is shown as a symbol of humiliation and perversion due to the colonized's skin color. Fanon speaks of how his blackness and difference were described by white people in France, where he lived, with degrading words ("terrible nigger", "look nigger"), as if to prove the psychological impact of colonialism on the exploited:

> On that day, completely dislocated, unable
> to be abroad with the other, the white man,
> who unmercifully imprisoned me, I took
> myself far off from my own presence, far
> indeed, and made myself an object. What
> else could it be for me but an amputation, an
> excision, a hemorrhage that spattered my
> whole body with black blood? But I did not
> want this revision, this thematization. All I
> wanted was to be a man among other men. I
> wanted to come lithe and young into a world
> that was ours and to help to build it together.
> (85)

Fanon is reduced to the position of an object by the exploiter/power and discourse that defines him as 'inferior' 'other' rather than as a subject based on his own will and desire. Reflecting the exploited black individual whose right to define his identity is taken away from him, Fanon emphasizes that the one who holds the power will also do the defining/labeling. *Black Skin, White Masks* emphasizes that as a result of identity formation, the exploited is pushed into the position of 'other' and that "the Negro deserves to be exemplified as everything that the exploiting Frenchman is not". (McLeod 21) While the exploiting subject is "civilized, rational, intelligent; the Negro is the other in the face of such qualities that symbolize the superiority of the

exploiter." (McLeod 22) As understood, Fanon, who insistently underlines the psychological effect of colonialism on the exploited, understands that the end of colonialism will be possible not only with political and economic developments, but also by ending the psychological blow, the negative effect that has been placed on the perception of the exploited by the exploiter, and by defining a new identity.

Another work of Fanon that effectively describes the humiliated self, loss of self and psychological state of the colonized in the face of the colonizer is *The Wretched of the Earth.* In his work, Fanon states that the colonial world establishes a Manichean world of perception and that within this established order, the natives are shown as the 'essence of all evil'. (41) The order in question, built on colonial discourse, has been internalized so effectively that colonized people have been made to believe that "their culture is an indicator of lack of spirituality and structural immorality." (42) Thus, the colonized societies have to abandon their own cultural values and adopt the cultures of the Europeans, which are shown as superior. (42) According to Fanon, the destructiveness of colonialism "reaches its logical conclusion and dehumanizes the native man, to be more precise, turns him into an animal. In fact, the

terms that the settler uses when talking about the native are zoological terms." (42) The existential complexity arising from the racial and cultural identities of the characters Nyasha and Tambu, whose novel *Nervous Conditions* (1988) will be examined in this study, is examined on the basis of Fanon's views.

Bhabha's approach to colonial discourse is different from Said's "overly dependent" approach, which is explained on binary oppositions such as East-West, exploiter-exploited, etc. (Childs and William 122) In his work, *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha defines colonial discourse as "dependent on the concept of 'stagnancy' in the ideological formation of the other" (66). According to Bhabha, who states that this state of stagnation also triggers ambivalence, the object of colonial discourse is expressed with ambivalence because it is "both ridiculed and desired." (124) In other words, the state of ambivalence carries with it both identification and rejection. In the section he wrote on Fanon in *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha mentions the phenomenon of 'identity' in relation to the ambivalence of psychic identification. According to him, identity cannot determine its existence by determining it in the opposition between culture and nature or by achieving self-

reflection in human nature (44), but rather it seizes the opportunity to gain its identity in its relationship with the other:

> the question of identification is never the affirmation of a pre-given identity, never a *self*-fulfilling prophecy – it is always the production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image. The demand of identification – that is, to be *for* an Other – entails the representation of the subject in the differentiating order of otherness. Identification, as we inferred from the preceding illustrations, is always the return of an image of identity that bears the mark of splitting in the Other place from which it comes. (45)

As understood from above, it is only possible to gain identity and determine desires through otherness or the other. While Fanon states that the exploited, as is known, desire to replace the exploiter, Bhabha interprets the displacement that occurs with identity as a state of wanting to be in both places.

Considering the representations of colonized women and their silenced situations in colonial literature, Josep Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) effectively explains both the colonialist, exclusionary and orientalist approach of the West

and the silence of the exploited woman and her relationship with the exploited continent:

> 'She walked with measured steps, draped in striped and fringed cloths, treading the earth proudly, with a slight jingle and flash of barbarous ornaments. She carried her head high; her hair was done in the shape of a helmet; she had brass leggings to the knee, brass wire gauntlets to the elbow, a crimson spot on her tawny cheek, innumerable necklaces of glass beads on her neck; bizarre things, charms, gifts of witch-men, that hung about her, glittered and trembled at every step. She must have had the value of several elephant tusks upon her. She was savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent; there was something ominous and stately in her deliberate progress. And in the hush that had fallen suddenly upon the whole sorrowful land, the immense wilderness, the colossal body of the fecund and mysterious life seemed to look at her, pensive, as though it had been looking at the image of its own tenebrous and passionate soul. (87)

As deduced from the above quote, the depiction of Kurtz's African mistress and her clothes, which are handled with Marlow's Western perception, shows the African exploited woman as ready to be exploited in case of need, not even needing to speak, and the discursive

characterizations that the West places on the East (gloomy, mysterious, fertile, ominous, dark...). *Heart of Darkness* is an important work in terms of the perception of the dark mind of the West (the exploiter) through the East (the exploited) and the image of the exploited woman as a silent object waiting to be destroyed.

Another important work that can be considered in terms of the depiction of exploited women during the colonial period is the section in *White Teeth* where Zadie Smith talks about the Jamaican exploited woman figure Ambrosia:

> Even Ambrosia Bowden, a capricious, long-legged, maga village-child who had not seen a schoolroom in all of her fourteen years, knew this advice was mistaken. When an Englishman wants to be generous, the first thing you ask is why, because there is always a reason. "You still here, pickney? "Im wan' see you. Don' let me spit pon de floor and make you get up dere before it dry!" So Ambrosia Bowden, with Hortense inside her, had dashed up to the Captain's room and returned there three times a week thereafter for instruction. Letters, numbers, the bible, English history, trigonometry and when that was finished, when Ambrosia's mother was safely out of the house, anatomy, which was a longer lesson, given on top of the student as she lay on her back, giggling. Captain

Durham told her not to worry about the baby,
he would do no damage to it. Captain
Durham told her that their secret child would
be the cleverest Negro boy in Jamaica. (357)

Captain Charlie Durham's sexual
exploitation of Ambrosia Bowden under the
pretext of educating and civilizing her, and his
subsequent departure from Jamaica, is important
in that it exemplifies the colonialist mentality's
exploitation and destruction of the place it goes to
under the guise of civilizing. As seen in most
colonial literature works, Zadie Smith interpreted
the system of exploitation in question through the
depiction of the use of the female body, and in
accordance with colonial literature works, the
woman, who is the exploited object, is in a silenced
position here.

Another important work that reflects the
example of exploited women in colonial literature
is Edward Morgan Forster's *A Passage to India*
(1924). Forster based his work on the binary power
opposition of exploiter/exploited within the
framework of the West's definition of the East
mentioned by Said. The work contains words that
carry the traditional patterns of nineteenth-century
imperial culture: 'inferior', 'subject races',
'subordinate, dependent people', 'dependency',

'expansion', 'authority'. (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 8) As a result of colonialism, just as the colonized object, the 'other' people are subjected to the oppression and othering of the exploiter, the exploited women also experience the same fate from the patriarchal exploiter and the patriarchal exploited who traditionally organize their lives.

The fifth chapter of the book reflects the attitudes of British women towards native Indians, especially women. Mrs. Turton, as the wife of a prejudiced, rude colonial British officer, shows how she belittles all Indian women to Adela Quested, who has just arrived in India: "You are superior to them, anyway. Don't forget that You are superior to everyone in India except one or two of the ranis, and they're on an equality".(61) Although Western female characters in India are not as much as men, both men and women are in a position superior to the exploited due to the power given by the patriarchal-colonialist ideology in the colonial lands (belonging to the dominant, exploiting, white, Western community). In this case, Western women also play an active role in the exploitation of women, who symbolize the East.

In accordance with works of colonial literature, the exploited woman is in an invisible/silenced position. For example, Aziz's wife is not present in the work, she is dead and depersonalized. Information about her is reached through Dr. Aziz's thoughts and memories. In other words, the exploited woman character is represented through male discourse. Aziz's wife, whose name we do not even know, is seen as an entity that only reflects Aziz's thoughts. Aziz relates his marriage to his wife with the love and devotion he feels for her: […] His wife won Aziz with love, with devotion that meant more than submission. […] She became the mother of a son and died while giving him a second son." (50) It is clearly shown that Aziz's wife is mentioned with a male-dominated discourse as if she was created to serve him. As in *Heart of Darkness*, in this work too, the woman is in a silenced/ignored position. In *Heart of Darkness*, women are in the role of an object reflecting the stereotypical values of the East that will trigger exploitation, while in *A Passage to India*, they are reduced to a position of being othered by the patriarchal structure, both

exploiter and exploited, and thus subjected to 'double colonization[5]'.

Things Fall Apart (1959) is an important work that broke new ground in African and post-colonial literature and set an example for many novels. According to Achebe, who had the opportunity to examine colonial literature during his student years, there was a need for a new literature in which they could speak for themselves: "While studying in Ibadan, I read terrible novels about Africa, and the stories that we should tell should not be told to us by others, no matter how talented and well-intentioned." (Achebe, Morning Yet on Creation Day 70) He particularly criticizes Joseph Conrad for his exclusionary and orientalist portrayal of Africa in his work, Heart of Darkness.

> The point of my observations should be quite clear by now, namely, that Conrad was a bloody racist. That this simple truth is glossed over in criticism of his work is due to the fact that white racism against Africa is such a normal way of thinking that its

[5] In A Double Colonzation: Colonial and Post-Colonial Women's Writing, Kirsten Holst Petersen and Anna Rutherford argue that there was no place for women in the colonial world and that this male-dominated environment maintained itself in the colonial and post-colonial period. (9)

manifestations go completely undetected. Students of Heart of Darkness will often tell you that Conrad is concerned not so much with Africa as with the deterioration of one European mind caused by solitude and sickness. They will point out to you that Conrad is, if anything, less charitable to the Europeans in the story than he is to the natives. A Conrad student told me in Scotland last year that Africa is merely a setting for the disintegration of the mind of Mr. Kurtz. Which is partly the point: Africa as setting and backdrop which eliminates the African as human factor. Africa as a metaphysical battlefield devoid of all recognizable humanity, into which the wandering European enters at his peril. Of course, there is a pre posterous and perverse kind of arrogance in thus reducing Africa to the role of props for the breakup of one petty European mind. But that is not even the point. The real question is the dehumanization of Africa and Africans which this age-long attitude has fostered and continues to foster in the world. And the question is whether a novel which celebrates this dehumanization, which depersonalizes a por tion of the human of the human race, can be called a great work of art. My answer is: No, it cannot. ("Image of Africa" 788)

However, in his important work, *Things Fall Apart* (1959), Achebe tried to reveal the authentic, local characteristics and life of Africa against the colonialist, ignoring understanding, but he based this on a male-dominated discourse. The fact that the character Okonkwo beats his wives, the fact that the names of Okonkwo's wives are not mentioned in the book, and that the figure normally referred to as the Water Goddess in Igbo culture is depicted as the God of Water in this work are evidence that post-colonial literature is also male-dominated.

Known for her support for women's movements and African women in many of her writings and works, Thiong'o drew criticism from female critics because of the protagonist Wanja character in her novel *Petals of Blood*, which she wrote in 1972. Govind Narain Sharma claimed that Thiong'o's Wanja character "reflects the spirit of Kenya, which is humiliated, exploited, and misused" and that she portrays a negative portrait of African women. Florence Stratton, in her article "The Mother African Trope", argues that Ngugi uses the Wanja character as a metaphor for Africa and Kenya and confines her to "mother, virgin, whore, or other roles that reflect male desire" as in Western stereotypical representations of women. (54) African women are depicted in a monolithic,

undiverse situation in post-colonial male-dominated literature, as in colonial literature.

Anne McClintock emphasizes that postcolonial discourse has led to the economic exploitation of women and thus disrespects the term postcolonialism. According to McClintock, women carry two-thirds of the world's workload, earn only 1/10 of the world's income, and own only one percent of the world's real estate. Thus, the promise of 'postcolonialism' has become a history of deferred hopes. ("The Angel of Progress" 260) In addition, McClintock claims that no 'postcolonial state has ever allowed women and men to benefit equally from the rights and resources of the national state'. (260) Postcolonial nations have always been identified with the contradictions, desires, and interests experienced by men, and the representation of national power has been based primarily on gendered power (male-dominated). (261) In parallel with this, she accuses Frantz Fanon, one of the famous theorists of postcolonial studies, of the following statements: "The look that the native directs at the settler is the look of lust… Whenever possible, he is in the settler's bed to sleep with his wife. The exploited man is a jealous man." (Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth 30) As can be understood from this quote, Anne McClintock thinks that a

male-dominated structure dominates Frantz Fanon's emotional and intellectual world, and parallel to what she said above, it is quite clear that anti-colonialist theories and studies operate on the basis of a male-dominated discourse.

John McLeod, in his work *Beginning Postcolonialism* (2000), criticizes Edward Said and Homi K. Bhabha, two important postcolonial theorists. McLeod states that Said, in his work Orientalism, "mentions the importance of gender" in the formation of the Eastern discourse, but does not elaborate on this issue, and as a result, he is close to the androcentric direction in his views on both colonial and postcolonial discourse, and refrains from facilitating the work of women theorists who came after him. (179) Similarly, McLeod criticizes Homi K. Bhabha in the same work for not reflecting the issue of gender and female identity in his works. According to him, "In Bhabha's studies on the ambivalence of colonial discourse, when he talks about the relationship between the 'exploiting subject' and the 'exploited' subject, he does not specifically mention which gender makes this model, the relationship, difficult." (180) This naturally leads us to ask whether the colonial discourse approaches men and women on an equal footing. McLeod emphasizes that "Bhabha's concepts of

'ambiguity', (indecision) and 'imitation' cannot answer this gender-based question." (180)

According to Carole Boyce Davies, disturbed by the prejudices of male-dominated postcolonial criticism, since "postcolonial women" (*Black Women* 80) are not yet as numerous and influential as men in this field of criticism, the history of postcolonial women has been shaped by the interpretations of male critics (mostly invisible, lacking in diversity and multi-facettedness). Therefore, Davies critiques postcolonialism and questions how this male-dominated criticism, by referring to the suffix 'post' in front of it, actually postpones women's hopes and re/male/ing the discourse, similar to colonial discourse. (86)

As understood from above, post-colonial women were primarily subjected to the exclusionary attitude of colonial discourse, and since both the exploiter and the exploited subject in colonial literature were men, post-colonial women were silenced and ignored. In *A Passage to India*, the wife of the Indian main character Dr. Aziz is nothing more than a picture on the wall, an object left in the shadow. In *Heart of Darkness,* Kurtz's African mistress is depicted as an ornament that symbolizes Africa's abundance, its

fertility ready to be exploited, satisfies Kurtz's lust, and carries orientalist, othering (mysterious, scary, strange...) symbols directed at Africa within the framework of colonial discourse.

Again, in *White Teeth*, Hortense's mother, who came from Jamaica a generation ago, is the silent victim of the lust of Captain Charlie Durham, the representative of Ambrosia's enlightened, colonial ideology in Jamaica, and is another symbol of the othering and colonizing sin of empire. In post-colonial or anti-colonial movements and literature, we also witness women's identities being shaped according to male-dominant gender stereotypes, then being excluded and left aside.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o, in his novel *Petals of Blood* (1972), used the character of Wanja as a 'symbol of the country, the homeland' (The Mother Afrika Trope), which is frequently encountered in both postcolonial and African literatures, in a way that parallels the Western-colonialist discourse, and depicted the exploited woman as a virgin or a whore ready to be exploited. In his work, *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, who is considered one of the founders of postcolonial African (Nigerian) literature, through Okonkwo, who is the

patriarchal, unyielding defender of authentic Africa and who finds his wives and other female characters unworthy of even being mentioned, the position of the African woman, who is subject to double colonization and excluded, is seen as a priority and ignored in postcolonial literature.

In the next stage, the focus is on the emergence of the othering, patriarchal, sexist understanding that sees women as mere 'servants' (in McClintock's words) in the West, which has permeated the colonial and post-colonial tradition, in a historical context. Important female figures such as Woolstonecraft, Woolf, De Beauvoir, Millet, Friedan, Greer, who contributed to the emergence of Western feminism are emphasized.

1.   Western Feminism

Feminism is defined as a movement that aims to improve the role and rights of women in society. This concept, derived from the Latin word 'femina' meaning woman, is generally accepted as the theory and practice of the women's liberation movement. According to the definition of Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore, "the feminist reader participates in the process of changing the dominant gender relations in society and sees the act of reading as an important position in the struggle for change."(1) Women's history has

always been ignored because history is recorded by male powers.

Therefore, considering the women's history, it is necessary to take into account the conventional prejudices and the roles that are culturally assigned to women. For instance, in this respect, the historical portrayal of Women has been reflected through male-oriented prejudices and judgements. (Lerner 37)

In this regard, since women are ignored, considered second-class citizens, locked up in the home and kept away from the political and social world of men, the only role prescribed to them is housewife, wife to husband and mother, they are not equal in legal terms and do not exist in political terms; while this group, which constitutes half of society, is oppressed, exploited and used, is voiced and portrayed by the dominating male-discourse and patriarchy having historically oppressed Women. The social reflection of the ceaseless superiority of men over women is patriarchy. Gerda Lerner defines patriarchy in her work, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (1986) as follows: "Patriarchy is an institutionalized form of male domination over women and children, both in society in general and within the family." (239)

As seen, after the feminists such as Mary Wollstonecraft and John Stuart Hall Mill, who first exposed the oppression of women individually and emphasized that education was essential for women, against all these injustices caused by the patriarchal structure; especially from the 18th century onwards, women were influenced by some movements that emerged in countries such as England, America and France to unite and demand their rights and raise their voices in this regard.

The French Revolution, having took place in 1789, was one of these movements with its impact that encompassed the entire world. Intellectuals in England were naturally influenced by this impressive movement. Mary Wollstonecraft was among these intellectuals and "quickly and enthusiastically" wrote and published her work *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* in 1790. (Wollstonecraft xi) This work was soon followed by Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* (1791) and William Godwin's *An Enquiry concerning Political Justice* (1793). However, it was *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) that brought Mary Wollstonecraft worldwide fame. With such an early work, Wollstonecraft not only raised awareness of women's problems, but also criticized the patriarchal social order and opposed its ignorant practices. Considering the conditions

of the period in which she lived, Wollstonecraft was "the first comprehensive feminist theorist to address the issues of a single standard of human virtue, women's education, and sexual non-discrimination." (Ege Uygur 556) In her work, Wollstonecraft emphasized that gender discrimination dates back to the time of Adam and Eve. In accordance with the biblical, the genesis story Adam and Eve, Eve was created as 'one of Adam's ribs' and therefore, Eve was not his companion; on the contrary, she was the servant of Adam, for whose pleasure the world existed. (Wollstonecraft 92)

If we generalize this line of thought, all male-dominated societies in the world limit women's existence to the home environment and expect them to be dependent on their husbands and fathers. In addition, Wollstonecraft states that women are deprived of education and that they are prevented from having "sufficient mental strength" by patriarchal societies. (84) In this context, preventing women from receiving education seems to be an important factor in oppressing them. Wollstonecraft emphasizes that patriarchal societies not only oppress uneducated women, but also keep them under "male protection", confine them to a world of innocence and beauty, and exclude them from the public

sphere. (84) As a result, in her work *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft emphasizes that the only way to end women's worthless and ineffective conditions is through education, and she also insists that "men and women should be educated." (86) However, Wollstonecraft envisioned women overthrowing the barriers one by one and being "on the same social, legal and intellectual level as men." (Castle 94) Mary Wollstonecraft's very influential thoughts enlightened the thoughts of many intellectuals (especially women), and the first wave feminist movement that emerged in this direction began in 1830 and continued until the 1920s.

First wave intellectuals focused more on social inequality between men and women and the "women's suffrage movement." (Tolan 319) Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony were two important figures in the first wave women's movement that was influential in 19th century America. As Gregory Castle emphasizes, Stanton wrote the "Declaration of Sentiments" for the Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention in 1848, which was a turning point for the feminist movement in America. (94) In this statement, Stanton states that women and men are created equal, but patriarchal society deprives women of

their own rights. In this context, "human history is the history of injustice, the usurpation of women's rights in favor of men, and the establishment of absolute domination over women as a result." (Castle 94) In addition, Stanton, together with Matilda Joslyn Gage, prepared the "Declaration of the Rights of Women in the United States in 1876." Similarly, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony later founded the National Woman Suffrage Association, which merged with the American Woman Suffrage Association in 1890. These declarations and associations "contributed greatly to securing women's voting rights" during the 19th century and the first wave feminist movement (95)

Discussions and studies on women's equal rights with men continued to be developed in the 1860s by intellectuals such as John Stuart Mill and his wife Harriet Taylor. John Stuart Mill first worked for women's right to vote and presented a bill to the parliament in 1866 for this purpose. (Castle 94) Later, in 1869, he published a study called *The Subjection of Women* to emphasize the necessity of equality for women. In this study, Mill states that the inequality between women and men begins from the moment they are born. In this context, Mill says the following: "All women are brought up from their earliest years to believe that

their ideal character is the exact opposite of men's, that they cannot be governed by their own ego and self-control, but must give and surrender their own selves to others." (24) Therefore, women's dependent status in society is imposed on them in the early stages of their lives. In this case, the most important step to eliminate this inequality is to implement gender equality in all areas of society. Similarly, as Mill said, "the principle which regulates the social relations between the sexes—the legal dependence of one sex on the other—is entirely false, a great obstacle to the development of mankind, and must be replaced by a perfect equality, without any power or privilege for either party, nor any power or privilege for the other." (5) Consequently, prior to contemporary feminist theory, pioneers of the first wave movement, such as Wollstonecraft, Stanton, Anthony, and Mill, drew attention to the importance of equality for women in all areas of society. Similarly, Friedrich Engels's *The Origin of the Family* (1884) and Olive Schreiner's *Woman and Labour* (1911) also supported women's rights, which would pave the way for future changes and improvements in women's conditions during the first wave feminist movement. (Barry 121)

In *The Origins of the Family[6]*, Engels, who draws attention to 'matriarchal' structures and the order in which women were freer and had a say in these structures by giving examples of Hopi in Arizona and Ashanti communities in Ghana in the early periods of history, says, "the removal of women's rights stemming from motherhood is a sign of a historical defeat of the female gender. Men have taken over the management of the home and women have not only been reduced to a position of serving him, but have also been turned into slaves to men's lust and a tool for childbearing." (30) Engels believes that this repressed female identity, which has been clearly imposed on women since the classical period and has never been prohibited, although it has been covered up, harms the female gender in society. Drawing on examples of matriarchal societies, he emphasizes that the gender roles assigned to women are a traditional approach rather than a destiny, and expresses his longing for a more egalitarian family order by abandoning this attitude.

Olive Schreiner, who believes that the entire human race and civilization will come to a halt in

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[6] The work can also be accessed at http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/origin_family.pdf

the person of women by hypothesizing their identity and labor against their will, expresses her views on the division of labor between men and women in her work, *Women and Labor[7]* as follows:

> We have no adequate scientific data from which to draw any conclusion, and any attempt to divide the occupations in which male and female intellects and wills should be employed, must be to attempt a purely artificial and arbitrary division: a division not more rational and scientific than an attempt to determine by the colour of his eyes and the shape and strength of his legs, whether a lad should be an astronomer or an engraver. (160)

It is argued that Oliver Schreiner emphasizes that trying to make a grade on the intelligence, knowledge and skill levels of women and men based on gender is far from scientific. Schreiner also emphasizes that when women are provided with appropriate opportunities, especially during wartime and when there is an equal distribution in terms of administration, it will be better seen how successfully contemporary life is preserved and maintained. (178) In other words, women, who are

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[7] The work can also be accessed at
http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1440/1440-h/1440-h.htm

unfairly and unscientifically kept away from the administration of both the family and the society and confined to traditional gender roles, are ready to refute the sexist decision-making mechanism with their labor under necessary conditions.

In the early twentieth century, Virginia Woolf, as a "modernist novelist and critic and member of the Bloomsbury Society," had a significant impact on the future of feminist literary theory. (Milner 110) According to Vincent B. Leitch, "she opened the doors to the entire field that contemporary feminist theory covers today." (1017) In her work, *A Room of One's Own* (1929), which is considered groundbreaking for the feminist movement, Woolf examines the situation of women in the process of history and later, as emphasized by feminist critics, makes important suggestions for women. First, she draws attention to the fact that she was not allowed into the famous library in Cambridge "without being accompanied by one of the university's docents." (8) After this incident, which affected her greatly, Woolf continues to focus on the reasons for the 'oppressed and unappreciated' situation of women that has continued for centuries. In this context, she says: "I thought how unpleasant it is to be left outside locked doors; I thought maybe it would be worse to be locked inside; one sex is safe and

secure while the other sex is in poverty and insecurity." (28) Here, Virginia Woolf underlines the captivity that women experience in their homes because they are excluded from society as a result of the policies of patriarchal society. In *A Room of One's Own,* Virginia Woolf emphasizes the situation of women once again with the following example:

Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figüre of man at twice its natural size. Without that power probably the earth would still be swamp and jungle. The glories of all our wars would be unknown. We should still be stratching the outlines of deer on the remains of mutton bones and bartering flints for sheep skins or whatever simple ornament took our unsophisticated taste. Supermen and Finger of Destiny would not have existed. The Czar and the Kaiser would never have worn crowns or lost them. Whatever may be their use in civilized societies, mirrors are essential to all violent and heroic action. That is why inferiority of Women, for if they were not inferior, they would cease to enlarge. That serves to explains in part the necessity that Women so often are to men. (41)

As inferred from Woolf's words, there are significant obstacles to women's existence in intellectual areas such as language and literature and in the public sphere, and there is a relationship between women's suppression and subordination and men's gaining power and status. For this reason, women have been prevented from expressing their own feelings and thoughts for centuries and have been "forced into silence, euphemism, or indirection." (Showalter "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness" 193).Therefore, the literary tradition in the West has remained under the domination of the male-centered understanding. After examining the situation of women in society, Virginia Woolf advises that if they want to write fiction; women should have an annual income to support both their own rooms and themselves. (121) Otherwise, a woman cannot sustain her own life on her own, like Judith Shakespeare, whom Shakespeare created as his sister and who was at least as talented as him. As a result, according to Woolf, when women achieved economic independence, they could go to college, receive better education, have more active lives, and write almost any genre of fiction (131).

It is claimed that women's movements have opposed some deep-rooted concepts and created their own concepts in order to eliminate the

prejudices discussed above. First of all, they have tried to ensure that these feelings of anger and pain emerge by raising consciousness in women's groups, emphasizing that what women experience individually is actually social and even political; they have opposed the domination of men by taking advantage of their being men, consciously or unconsciously - male chauvinism; they have opposed sexism, which is the humiliation of one sex by the other; the symbolic power of men and the phallus over women - phallocracy; they have opposed the androcracy system, which is centered on men, and the male-dominated system, in which the female half of society is oppressed by the male half. (Andree 17)

In the second stage, Feminist Criticism reveals that women have their own literary tradition and style of writing. In this direction, critics such as Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have tried to reveal the existing women's literary tradition. In the last stage, French feminists aimed not only to show that there is an existing women's tradition - women's own style of writing - but also to change the male-originated terms and concepts of the works. While Anglo-American feminists examine the history of women as readers and writers, French feminists focus on

how women are represented in language, psychoanalysis and art.

Early feminists such as Wollstonecraft, Anthony and Stanton, while revealing the oppression of women despite the powerful and privileged positions of men compared to women, also revealed their struggle for the 'right to vote' and their reaction to all these injustces. Feminists such as Friedan, Millett and Greer, who emerged with the New Feminist Movement in the late 1960s, analyzed the social and cultural experiences of women and investigated how these experiences were reflected in literary works.

The difference between the Second Wave Feminist Criticism and the previous period is its hybridity. In other words, in the previous period, they not only showed their political stance on women's issues by highlighting their own experiences, as Wollstonecraft, Anthony, Stanton and Woolf did, but also attempted to identify and reproduce representations of women in male-dominated literary and intellectual worlds. Thus, they both made literary criticism and examined women's problems within a cultural-social framework. Therefore, the works in this period are a comprehensive mixture of cultural and literary criticism. (Humm 34) Their aim was to convey

how the cultural oppression of women would be conveyed. In other words, Second Wave Feminists compared the representations of women in literature with the real situation of women in society. Because these literary texts were also products of patriarchal power. In order to do this, they first had to reflect the situation of women in society.

Simone de Beauvoir also emphasizes the oppression of women and the fact that femininity is a cultural idea invented by a male-centered society in her groundbreaking work *The Second Sex* (1949). She explains the society's perception of men as positive and women as negative, the second sex or the 'other': "One is not born a woman, but rather becomes a woman… It is the entirety of civilization that produces this creature. Only the intervention of another can make someone 'Other'. (Beauvoir 9) In particular, women have problems with their own self and the status of being (other) from the beginning. They are taught to satisfy, they must try to satisfy, they must make themselves an object. They are seen as dolls and their freedom is denied. (22) De Beauvoir accepts that women have different physical structures than men, but emphasizes that these differences only have meaning in social arrangements. (Ascher 15) In fact, as Millett

emphasizes, what is important in the male-dominated order is political power, and what provides this order is not physical power but the power of the mind. According to De Beauvoir, women and men should be equal in their professional lives, this equality should be based on a common existence and should be independent of their sexuality, and their basic choices should be determined accordingly, and throughout the work she emphasizes that women, who were the target audience in the war of independence, received culture, legend, and political education that included every stage of society, but were still treated as second-class citizens. She also examines that being the second sex is not a destiny and that women must fight to achieve their rights.

Kate Millett reflects her thoughts on the situation of women in her work, *Sexual Politics* (1970): "The image of women as we know it is an image created by men and fashioned to suit their needs. These needs spring from the fear of the 'otherness' of woman. Yet this notion itself presuppose that patriarchy has already been established and the male has already set himself as the human norm, the subject, and referent to which the female is 'other' or alien." (46) Millett emphasizes that the domination established by the male-centered understanding over women is seen

as a gain earned from birth, and that this situation is the most widespread ideology of our civilization. In this case, the fact that men have a more effective and powerful body creates a hierarchy between the two sexes and makes women dependent due to their weakness. Finally, when it comes to the issue of status; the prejudice that men are superior, which is accepted by everyone based on men's superiority, provides men with a superior position and women with an inferior position. Thus, the dominant group's needs and values are distributed within the framework they deem appropriate for themselves and the subordinate group, stereotypical characteristics as 'male' and 'female': aggression, intelligence, power, activity are assigned to men, while non-resistance, ignorance, compliance, virtue and ineffectiveness are assigned to women. (Millett 26) According to Millett, patriarchy is not a political system but a way of thinking and living that has been embedded in culture. Accordingly, considering the relationship between parents based on cultural sexual policies in the family institution, children are conditioned to sexual roles based on masculinity and femininity during their education. For this reason, Millett also emphasizes that gender is a cultural formation, not a biological one.

Both Millett and Beauvoir argue that women are not adequately reflected by men in literary works because literature is also a reflection of male-dominant ideology. While Millett suggests abandoning phallocentricity in literature, she also theorizes the women's liberation movement. According to De Beauvoir, women have always been treated as the 'Other' in literature. The main thing has always been men and the world they create.

Germaine Greer, in her work, *The Female Eunuch* (1970), examines female stereotypes such as introversion, refinement and perverse sexuality. In this work, she argues that women's sexual passivity - not reacting to negativity, submitting to orders, not being enterprising, passive - is linked to castration, and that this role is imposed on them by history and women themselves, and Greer claims that women are characterized according to the definitions of femininity that are appropriate to the conditions of that day. She also focuses on the fact that women are seen as men in society and their sexuality is ignored and misinterpreted. (15) Gyno-critics - Showalter, Moers, Gilbert & Gubar, have shown how current male-dominated literature reflects women incorrectly, and therefore, they have shown why women's

experiences should be told by women, the ways and searches for this with historical examples.

1. Solidarity of Differences/ The Third Wave: Postcolonial/African Women's Literature

The approaches that emerged towards the end of the 1980s, to which important names such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Chandra Mohanty Talpade, Bell Hooks, Elaine Showalter, Barabara Smith and Hazel V. Carby contributed with their ideas, are defined as "literary studies of literature written about formerly colonized countries, especially in English" (265) in the words of Charles E. Bressler, and are also considered as a form of defense that emphasizes that people who were subjected to colonization should take their place as subjects, not objects. After the second wave of feminists in the 1960s and 1970s, who aimed to examine the representations of women in male-centered literary texts and to reveal the originality and freedom of women's writing, in the 1980s, women critics who found the scope of literary texts and representations that featured middle-class, White women as exclusionary and who remained outside of dominant female identities began to raise their voices. Having felt excluded, Women of color, especially those of the

Third World developed new rules and representations to express themselves. Such approaches, which blend post-structuralist, psychoanalytic, and postcolonialist theories with feminist literary studies, also problematized concepts such as Eurocentricity, sisterhood, and racism. Black and "Third World" feminist critics challenged early feminist criticism and developed distinctly postcolonialist perspectives, providing the opportunity and conditions to help transform feminist criticism.

As seen above in the section on the emergence of Western-centered feminism, class, race and geographic differences were not highlighted in women-centered works where Western feminist criticism was concentrated. Although they touched on forms of power other than patriarchy, albeit slightly, in the early period, radical feminists paid more attention to socially determined differences among women after the 1980s, but still continued to emphasize the idea of sisterhood as the basis of resistance.

In her work, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, (1984), bell hooks (Gloria Jean Watkins) states that the exclusion of white women harms the feminist struggle. According to her, "when we look at the nature of the concept of

gender, 'race' and 'class' are perspectives that change the direction of feminist understanding." (xii) Her aim in writing this work is to reveal how the thoughts of African and Third World women are being squeezed into narrow patterns and to ensure that issues related to feminism are represented in a broader context by utilizing the race, class and gender-based views of women of color. Hooks, who frequently criticizes second-wave feminists in her works, emphasizes that the works of this period are exclusionary. According to hooks, although feminism's priority is women, this movement and literary theory are extremely important for humanity. The situation that humanity has brought to the world we live in with a male-centered understanding is obvious and this world needs a new understanding. For this reason, "feminism is for Everybody." (Feminism is for Everybody x)

It may be misleading to consider postcolonial theory, which developed as a reaction to the colonial understanding that created the other according to its own exclusionary doctrines, and which developed a "category of literature that is completely opposed to the single-voiced authority of colonial writing" (Boehmer 4) that defines itself as the other, separately from postcolonial feminism, which supports anti-colonial literature.

Postcolonial feminism, also referred to as "Third World" feminism, is an approach against Western discourse that generally prioritizes both White men and White women and excludes differences. The history of contemporary, recent feminism has shown us how important differences and special conditions based on geographical situation are in examining and resisting patriarchy. This situation is the main theme of postcolonial/Third World feminist writing that struggles against Eurocentrism.

American feminist Barbara Smith, one of the important figures of Third World and Black women's writing, talks about the stance she took as part of the "Third World" feminist movement as follows:

> I am not just talking about my sisters here in the United States—Native American, Latina, Asian American, Arab American—but about my sisters all over the globe. (...) Third World feminism has enriched not only the women it has touched but political practice in general. (Smith 27)

Living in the United States and writing directly or indirectly influenced by her experiences there, Smith used the term 'Third World' to refer to women with racial and class ties to minorities in

both formerly exploited and newly developing countries and in the white, Western societies that dominated the discourse.

In her article "Under Western Eyes," Chandra Talpade argues that Western feminist writings on Third World women often "implicitly exploit the material and historical diversity in the lives of Third World women and thus create a composite and singular 'third world woman', and this seemingly arbitrarily constructed image bears the authoritarian signature of Western humanist discourse." (Mohanty 53) Thus, Western feminist discourse still retains its power as a decision-making mechanism for evaluating the Third World. In contrast, Mohanty argues that Third World women, like Western women, can be historical and cultural subjects in the societies they live in and that they have a say in the environment they live in, and that they are not completely monolithic, silent, and victims as Western discourse suggests. Mohanty points out how Third World women tend to be portrayed as victims of male control and traditional cultural practices. In such characterizations, very limited attention is paid to history and differences.

Western feminism is beginning to function as a norm in judging the Third World. In contrast,

if the issues of Third World women are analyzed in detail by taking into account the social relations they are in, a more complex picture emerges. Opposing the international, transhistorical and uniform approach of Western feminism, women theorists of Third World emphasize that the nations in question have "their own struggle histories and theoretical models that shape and transform their feminist work." (Alexander and Mohanty xx) Mohanty states that Third World women, just like Western women, are historically and culturally produced as subjects by the societies they live in in unique ways and that they both have a say in the environment they live in and are their own representatives. In the preface that M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Mohanty wrote together for the work, *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* (1997), they emphasize the importance of the sense of agency in the political struggle for change as follows:

> Women do not imagine themselves as victims or dependents of governing structures but as agents of their own lives. Agency is understood here as the conscious and ongoing reproduction of the terms of one's existence While talking responsibility for this process. And agency is anchored in the practices of thinking of oneself as a part of feminist collectivities and organizations.

This is not the liberal, pluralist individuals self under capitalism. For precisely this reason, decolonization[8] is central to the definition and vision of feminist democracy. (Alexander and Mohanty xxviii)

Alexander and Mohanty speak of a woman's stance that is contrary to the Western feminist perspective's attributions of Third World women as victims, objects to be saved, slaves to local-cultural norms, which Mohanty describes as "inconsistent" ("Under Western Eyes 65). Third World women reproduce their own positions within the framework of responsibility in both the national and women-centered struggle areas in which they take part. They evaluate both their male-dominated national discourses and their own feminist movements within their own internal dynamics. In order for this evaluation to be made within a planned foresight, decolonization provides a freer field of action.

From this point of view, if we look at Elleke Boehmer's observation regarding the self-representation of Third World African women, Boehmer claims that when male nationalists or

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[8] When translating the word decolonization, the word was given as 'decolonization' to emphasize that the post-colonial period was a gain achieved as a result of both physical and psychological struggle.

anti-colonialist writers liberate the countries they live in from colonial powers, it does not mean much to say that they liberated the "motherland" because the metaphor that male nationalists mention does not symbolize the real "motherland." ("Stories of Women" 4). According to Elleke Boehmer, the concept of "motherland" is important for Third World women and women of color because, based on this concept, women bring to the forefront "triple oppression, othering, the effects of colonialism, the formation of gender and male-dominated language" through men, and as a result of examining all these, "their own methods of representation." In other words, contrary to Western feminist perception, Third World women have a say in the criticism of both colonialism and male-dominated structures and the reproduction of their own representations in the collective struggle areas in which they take part.

If we compare Chandra Mohanty's article "Under Western Eyes" with Joseph Conrad's novel *Under Western Eyes*, we can have a better idea of the West's perception of the East. The novel, which is portrayed from the perspective of a Western language teacher living in Genoa, is about a conservative philosophy student named Razumov who unintentionally finds himself involved in a political murder committed by a

revolutionary young man named Holdin, whom he knows from school, and how he escapes possible complicity by reporting him, and later the love and regret he feels for Haldin's sister Natalia.

The narrator's insistence on emphasizing many times that this story is not a Western story and that it does not reflect Western thought reminds us of Said's image of the East and the situation where the Third World woman mentioned by Mohanty is portrayed as a 'monolithic'. Another important point is that Joseph Conrad, known as a nationalist Polish, likens the period leading to revolution in Russia to autocracy, again through a Western narrator, due to his allergy to Russia. The narrator, who tries to understand that period and its events by saying "It seemed so according to my Western observations" (213), builds his world of perception on binary oppositions.

Another fundamental issue in Third World feminist criticism is who speaks for whom and whose voice is heard when discussing Third World texts and women's issues. This issue was addressed by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her 1988 article, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", which had a great impact in the academic community. In this work, Spivak examines "the relations between Western

discourses and the possibility of speaking on behalf of or for subaltern women," and in her work, Spivak "indirectly critiques current Western efforts to problematize the Third World subject in order to question how it is represented in Western discourse." (Spivak 271). According to Spivak, "the presentation, or rather, the focus on, of anti-sexist work among women of color or class oppressed women in the First or Third World is undeniably on our agenda. We should welcome any knowledge that comes from fields that have been silenced, such as anthropology, political science, history, and sociology. In contrast, the assumption or construction of a consciousness or subject validates such work and, in the long run, merges with the artifacts of imperialist subject construction, confusing epistemic violence with the progress of learning and civilization. Thus, the subaltern woman is condemned to silence as always." (295)

Spivak's article "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" (1985) has played an important role in both defining the boundaries of postcolonial studies and in shaping the debates on Third World/Postcolonial feminism. Spivak begins her article by stating that it is "impossible to read nineteenth-century English literature without remembering imperialism and considering

it as a social duty of England." (148) Therefore, in this study, Spivak emphasizes the dangers of reading nineteenth-century texts from a twentieth-century feminist perspective and without taking into account the imperialist meanings and values that were in circulation at the time the text was produced. (148) In this article, Spivak also challenges the blindness of European-American feminist theories and movements to women of color. Spivak argues that feminist criticism, while valuing the emergence of expression without considering where the process of the subject and the acquisition of individuality made possible by the expansion of imperialism by Western women originates, reproduces 'the self-evident basic premise of imperialism'. (149) In this vein, Spivak points to the importance of women writers and literary texts within colonial discourse. As can be inferred from the article, the celebration and reflection of works such as Jane Eyre as important feminist examples and the invisibility of the character of Bertha, in this case, reveal the impossibility of subjectivity for women of color.

As Showalter notes, for both African Americans and feminists, the black woman is "the other woman, the silenced partner." (Showalter, "A Criticism of Our Own" 214) This is true not only in social life, but also in literary theory,

especially. Over the years, black women have criticized both the "sexism of black literary history" and the "racism of feminist literary history." (214) In this respect, feeling excluded from both spheres, black women have attempted to claim and establish their own space, one that African male and white feminist understandings cannot dominate. Black women had to emphasize the subjectivity and uniqueness of their own experiences because they occupied a "doubly othered" position. (Ward & Herndl 741) As Smith emphasizes, "Being black shapes gender experience in a profound way, just as being female inevitably shapes race experience." (Smith, "A Criticism of Our Own" 317) The exclusions that black women were subjected to based on gender, race, and class led them to produce new definitions and concepts.

Hazel V. Carby, in her article "White Woman Listen! Black Feminism and Boundaries of Sisterhood" (1982), complains about the fact that black women are not given a place in history. When they are given a place, they are shown in the same group as white-Western women, in a stereotypical depiction.

According to Carby, in addition to the monotonous story of white women, their own

"stories are more diverse" (45) and in this story, the oppression that black women are subjected to "three times more on the basis of race, gender and class can be seen and the special history of black women is defined". For Carby, who also refers to racist discourses and attitudes applied to blacks, there is no difference between racism and sexism because both attitudes "cause a common and social attitude by feeding on natural and biological differences".(45) In other words, there is no difference between the exclusionary/stereotypical attitude towards a woman because of her gender and the marginalization and humiliation of a person because of her color or race. However, Carby draws attention to the fact that the stories and hardships of "black women" who are marginalized because they are both black and women are not seen by white feminists. (49) She emphasizes that black women have different and equally useful strategies for holding on to life because they have experienced both slavery and colonialism, and calls on white-Western feminists to break away from their narrow stereotypes and act together with and understand excluded black women.

1. African Women Literature

Definitions belong to the definers----not to the defined![9]

In this literature, it is important to reveal the inadequate and limited portrayal of African women based on racist and sexist prejudices in both male-dominated African literature and in European-centered academia and colonial literature. In the framework of literature dominated by African, Third World black women writers such as Bessi Head, Ama Ata Aidoo, Buchi Emecheta, Flora Nwapa, Mariama Ba and Tsitsi Dangarembga; efforts made to increase the existing critical approaches to women's issues starting from the 1970s and 80s have increased the importance of feminism/womanism in African literature. In this direction, according to Chikwenye O. Ogunyemi, "Where a white woman writer is a feminist, a Black woman writer is likely to be a 'womanist.'" (64) In other words, the black female writer, in addition to the 'gender' issue that white women criticize and focus on, also reflects 'racial', 'cultural', 'national', 'class' and 'political' situations both in her own thought structure and in her works. The concept of feminism is problematic for Third World women

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[9] Morrison*,* Toni. *Beloved.* New York: Vintage, 2004, 190

because feminism and the perception of feminist criticism, as developed by white women in America and Europe, are aimed entirely at overthrowing the patriarchal dominant order. In this context, the concepts that serve Western feminism focus on the power struggle between the sexes: White women are against white men. According to Western (European-American) women, black women are their natural and loyal allies. According to Western feminists, sexist attitudes and discourses should be the fundamental concern of every woman through sexual politics because the defeat of sexist discourse will also bring about the ultimate liberation of all women. Apart from the priority of overcoming patriarchy, feminism has also been characterized as a highly individualistic worldview that advocates personal growth and individual fulfillment over broader societal goals and needs. (Frank 17)

In this context, as can be understood, feminism's main concern is seen as gender and individuality. It sees men and the patriarchal order as obstacles to women's freedom and personal development. Feminism presents itself as a literary criticism movement, as "a stick being thrown at men". (Nnaemeka 82) However, although black women have a problem with the patriarchal order and the sexism it produces, black women also see

concepts such as 'racism' and 'classism' as equally threatening to them. Therefore, it is not surprising that black women do not accept the feminist teachings expressed by white women, since they do not suit them. As a result, first in North America and Europe, and later in Africa, African women began to search for a 'feminist attitude' that was suitable for their own structures and cultures. As a result of this search, concepts such as 'Black Feminism', as stated by Esther Y. Smith, Patricie Hill Collins, Erlene Stetson and Barbara Christian, and 'Womanism', as stated by Alice Walker, were produced.

In her article "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism," Barbara Smith accuses black male intellectuals of "sexist approaches," "misogyny," and white female critics of racism and "straight sexism." Smith, who calls for a more "autonomous" rather than "separatist" black feminist movement, recommends the establishment of close ties not only among black critics but also among all "Third World Women." Smith lays out the basic framework for a cultural critical approach and argues that "a feminist approach to literature that recognizes not only gender politics but also the racial and class politics that play vital roles in the work of black women writers is absolutely necessary." (170)

According to Smith and other black feminist theorists, the main purpose of black feminism is not to overthrow the patriarchal structure. On the contrary, it strives to purge this system of all traps that could pose a threat to the well-being and success of all black people. However, as prominent black feminists began to identify with 'Third World' women in the 1980s and their perception of the 'race' and 'class' based prejudices in the mainstream feminist movement increased, they began to search for a concept that would better characterize their own unique identities.

In this context, the famous African-American writer, critic, and activist Alice Walker introduced the term 'womanism' instead of concepts such as 'Black Feminism' and 'non-white women's movement'. She expresses the difference of this concept from the concept of 'feminism', which is widespread in academia and literary circles, through the words of the character Celie in her work, *The Color Purple*, again within a framework based on race and class: "We are not white. We are not Europeans. We are black like Africans. … We and Africans will be working towards the common goal of improving the condition of black people everywhere." (115) According to Alice Walker, womanism;

[…] emphasizes women who love all other women, sexually or non-sexually. values women's culture, emotional changeability, and strength. sometimes loves individual men, committed to the survival and integrity of all human beings, male or female. (xi)

Despite this, while Walker's term 'womanism'[10] was being used in academic circles, some African women writers were also searching for a concept that would convey fundamental African women's issues more effectively. Some of the writers who had problems with the concept of feminism and could not express themselves fully with this concept were well-known literary women figures of the African continent such as Flora Nwapa, Ama Ata Aidoo, Buchi Emecheta and Tsitsi Dangarembga. According to Aidoo, "if you call me a feminist, I will not object. But I cannot be a feminist because I write about women." (Owomoyela 339) Emecheta also ends her efforts to be labeled as a feminist by saying: "It would not be right for me to be called a feminist because it is a European concept and it was put forward by

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[10] Alice Walker actually first used the word 'womanist' in her short story "Coming Apart", published in Laura Lederer's anthology *Take Back the Night* in 1979. However, she later elaborated and conceptualized the content of the word and began using it as a term in her work *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose* in 1983.

European women. I would not want to be labeled as a 'feminist' by them." (Grandquist and Strotesbury 19)

Walker states that black women are victims of both racism and sexism due to their 'double identity'. In the face of this situation, Walker makes the following observation: "Black women are subject to oppression by almost everyone, beyond recognition." (Walker 149) Walker strengthens her observation about this situation with the following analogy: "Black women are also described among the public as the 'tractor of the world', which best describes their position. Because we have carried the burdens that everyone else has refused to carry." (Walker 237) Alice Walker's womanism is one of the more concrete forms of black feminism that has been discussed for many years. Alice Walker first used the term womanism in her collected articles in her book In Search of Our Mothers Gardens, (1983). In the beginning of his work, he defines the concept as "African-centered, healing, shaped, spiritual" (Razak 100):

From Womanish. (Opp. of "girlish," i.e., frivolous, irresponsible, not serious.) A black feminist or feminist of color. From the black folk expression of mothers to female children, "You acting womanish," i.e., like a

woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or *willful* behavior. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered "good" for one. Interested in grown-up doings. Acting grown up. Being grown up. Interchangeable with another black folk expression: "You trying to be grown." Responsible. In charge. *Serious.* 2. *Also:* A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women's strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or nonsexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male *and* female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health. Traditionally universalist, as in: "Mama, why are we brown, pink, and yellow, and our cousins are white, beige, and black?" Ans.: "Well, you know the colored race is just like a flower garden, with every color flower represented." Traditionally capable, as in: "Mama, I'm walking to Canada and I'm taking you and a bunch of other slaves with me." Reply: "It wouldn't be the first time." 3. Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. *Loves* the Spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. *Loves* the Folk. Loves herself. *Regardless.* 4.

> Womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender. (Walker, *In Search*, 7-8)

In the above long definition, Alice Walker defines the word "womanist" by first looking at its meaning and daily usage. According to Walker, this term is derived from the word "womanish" which is also used in black folk expressions such as "you act like a woman". As Collins also mentions, "taking some Southern Black folk expressions that mothers use for their daughters, Walker states that the concrete history of black women makes the womanist worldview and perspective accessible primarily and perhaps especially to black women." (Collins 10) In addition, the attention drawn to the mature aspect of womanism shows that the excessive desire and curiosity of black women for a subject or situation does not stem from a "childish passion" but from a sense of responsibility and an effort to have a say in their own destiny.

In the second article of the definition, Walker defines 'womanist' by drawing attention to the different types of relationships that are possible between women. Moreover, according to Walker, womanists love other women, their cultures, their emotional worlds, their strength; in short, the characteristics that come from being women, and

this love can undoubtedly be directed towards men. As can be understood, Walker does not disparage heterosexual relationships, as she emphasizes lesbian relationships in her definition.

This is undoubtedly the most obvious difference between womanism and white-heterosexual-middle-class feminism. According to Collins, "womanism apparently offers black women the opportunity to focus on gender issues and oppression without attacking black men." (11) As can be understood from the quote, Walker clearly demonstrates her 'indiscriminate' attitude. Walker makes it clear that womanism is not against 'racial liberation' and, on the contrary, sees it as an important area of solidarity. By highlighting the 'universal' womanism, she leaves the door open to non-exclusive attitudes. The 'rose garden' metaphor shows that Walker is actually "a supporter of both cultural diversity and unity of different colors, regardless of gender." (Collins 11) In other words, Walker emphasizes the importance of tolerant attitudes not only between genders but also between races. As Davis says, and as Walker's definition exemplifies, "individuals cannot be considered separate from the existence of the earth, but rather act as extensions of the universe." (Davis 33)

In the third article, Walker defines 'womanism' as connotative. Walker does not shy away from associating women with the concepts traditionally attributed to them (for example, the moon, known as the symbol of femininity). Walker includes in the list of things women love both the worldly symbols of life such as music, dance, love, food, and the symbols that symbolize the spiritual side of our existence such as the moon and nature. Furthermore, according to Walker, the 'womanist' loves to struggle, herself and her people.

In the fourth article of the definition, Alice Walker shares an important observation comparing feminism and womanism. According to this statement, Walker states that while 'purple' and 'lavender' have common aspects, they also inevitably have differences. According to Walker, at first glance, the colors 'purple' and 'lavender' are quite similar to each other. However, the color purple has a more intense darkness that includes lavender. If we proceed here, womanism, in common with 'feminism', includes issues related to 'gender' and female identity'. However, the area of interest and action of womanism is not limited to gender and female identity only, and at the same time, it focuses on issues originating from 'race and class' at an equal level, without

falling into the antagonistic, dichotomous attitude that feminism is likely to resort to. In this way, it makes a more inclusive and collaborative effort.

According to Davis, with her definition in the fourth article, Walker directs her reader's attention to the intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual integrity of women, and draws attention to the necessity of establishing a global community in which all members of society are encouraged to live together. Walker's 'womanist' project also aims to bring together the 'past' and the 'present,' the 'individual' and the 'society,' 'personal and political change within a single whole." (Davis 33)

Layli Phillips, who includes the views of many researchers and theorists on womanism in her book The Womanist Reader, which she edited, approaches the concept of womanism from a unifying and universal perspective, from a framework similar to Alice Walker. According to Phillips, womanism, whose terminology has been established primarily in the fields of theology, literature and history since the mid-1980s, is not a concept that can be addressed only in the context of Black Americans. It is also possible to come across "approaches that explore womanist thought in Africa, Australia, Canada, among Native

Americans, in Southeast Asia and in the context of Indian Culture." (xxii) However, Phillips, who also stated that the womanist approach was more widespread and accepted among black women, answered the question of why the literary theory in question was more widespread among black or non-white women as follows: "Black women or women of color have always been at the bottom of every social hierarchy created by men, especially during the last four centuries until the modern period."(xxxviii) For this reason, oppressed and excluded personalities with a womanist perspective have chosen to define and express themselves in a different and more resonant way than the center within the subaltern situation in which they are concentrated.

Phillips, who has a stance similar to Alice Walker's definition of womanism, lists five important characteristics of womanism as follows: "1) It is against oppression. 2) It values mother tongue and mother culture. 3) It is not ideological. 4) It is spiritual. 5) It is communitarian." (xxvi) Phillips' womanism resists the oppression and extermination policies carried out against every segment and community, and does not adopt an attitude that excludes different understandings and approaches by only prioritizing her own philosophy of life. As we can often see in African

literature, the original is sensitive to the mother culture, and does not keep a distance from the anthropological and mythological values of the culture in question. In accordance with the stance of 'being communitarian', which is one of the most important articles of womanism, the work carried out and the attitude adopted to eliminate any problem that arises also aim to eliminate other problems of the society.

For example, while we look at Tsitsi Dangarembga's work *Nervous Conditions* (1988) primarily on the basis of the 'women's issue', we also have to look at the concepts of 'colonialism' and the independence and wholeness that Zimbabwean society needed towards the end of colonialism. The novel reveals the identity adventure of Nyasha and Tambu, as well as their psychological state in the face of nationalism and colonial discourse and ideology.

After the term womanism was first used by Alice Walker, Clenora Hudson-Weems aimed to give womanism an African-centered context with her work *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves* (1993). Afrikana womanism should not be confused with the concept of 'womanism' that Alice Walker put forward in her essays "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens". Afrikana womanism,

which is neither an extension nor an addition to feminism, is also not black feminism, Afrikana feminism or Walker's womanism that some African women try to support. Afrikana womanism is designed and put forward for all women of African heritage and descent. It is based on African culture and therefore necessarily focuses on the desires, needs, struggles and unique experiences of Afrikana women. (23-24)

The characteristics of this mostly African-centered womanism, as defined and named by Hudson-Weems herself, are as follows: In order to critically understand and evaluate the Afrikana woman, we need to know eighteen common characteristics.

> 1. Names herself. 2. Defines herself. 3. Is family-centered. 4. Is authentic in sisterhood. 5. Is strong. 6. Cooperates with men during struggle. 7. Is integrative. 8. is authentic. 9. Is flexible in role playing. 10. Is respected. 11. Is well-known. 12. Is spiritual. 13. Is compatible with men. 14. Is respectful to elders. 15. Can adapt to conditions. 16. Is ambitious. 17. Is motherly. 18. Is protective, maternal. (143)

Hudson-Weems's Afrikana womanhood is a concept that African women and men have taken part in to develop their own concepts and evaluate

the oppression that has resulted from Western-centric forces such as feminist domination, which she finds inherently racist and patriarchal, colonialism and neo-colonialism.

Hudson-Weems's womanism is based on the way Afrikana women name and define themselves. She distances herself from even 'black feminism', as she believes it does not fully reflect Afrikana women. Hudson-Weems also criticises Alice Walker for thinking of womanism as being in partnership with feminism, and frequently emphasises in her work that feminism is inherently racist, claiming that feminism falls short of 'race', which is as important to Afrikana women as gender and female identity. According to Hudson-Weems,

> Today, white feminists do not only remain silent about the important issues that affect the lives of Afrikaner women, but the majority of them have not even shown sensitivity to the importance of these situations. For example, the feminist movement is not free from 'racism' because many feminists are guilty of racism. (49)

As Hudson-Weems's quote suggests, the priorities of Afrikaans womanism and feminism are different. Hudson-Weems also uses Sojourner

Truth's speech "Ain't I A Woman" to support the claim that feminism has historically been tainted by racism. According to Hudson-Weems, Truth was "attacking the elements of the women's rights agenda that excluded her" (36). Unfortunately, according to Hudson, the exclusion was based entirely on racism.

In conclusion, Hudson-Weems insists that Afrikana womanism must define itself and be named by Afrikana women, and stresses that an independent theory must work with men to address the problems arising from ethnic discrimination, gender and sexism:

> Afrikana womanism also fights, in collaboration with men, for the liberation of humanity and the Afrikana people. Unlike mainstream feminism, whose struggle is typically independent of male support and participation, Afrikana womanism invites their male partners or peers to join the struggle for liberation and equality in society, as this struggle has traditionally served as the 'glue' that holds everyone together against 'racism'. (61)

One of the main characteristics of Afrikana womanism is its compatibility with male struggles. (Hudson-Weems 6)1 Like black feminism, Afrikana womanism also departs from the

framework drawn by feminism, which is filled with white-patriarchal values. However, according to Clenora Hudson-Weems, black feminism does not fully align with Afrikana womanism. Because "black feminism lacks a perspective that is historically African-centered, and this has failed to mobilize most African-American women as feminists to solve problems in Africa." (Hudson-Weems 27). Afrikana womanism's main goal is to help bring the independence and reality of African races to light. (Hudson-Weems 51) Thus, the African or African-descended woman chooses her own identity without leaving it in the hands of her oppressor. According to Daphne Ntiri, self-definition is necessary for all African people to exist and should not be delegated to the oppressors because this can lead to problematic implications regarding the portrayal of African people, as can be seen in the representational problems created by colonial discourse. Therefore, Ntiri does not find it sufficient to represent Africans in different terms (black feminism, African feminism) because these approaches primarily focus on gender issues and do not prioritize African experiences and culture. (Ntiri 165)

Another theorist and critic who has brought an Afrocentric approach to womanism is the Nigerian Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi.

According to Ogunyemi, many black women novelists who write in English do not cooperate with radical white feminist women, but instead, "they have discovered other positions for themselves and have discovered exciting, fluid structures that defy rigid classifications. Moreover, where a white woman writer can be a feminist, a black woman writer is likely to be a 'womanist.'" ("Dynamics" 21) For Ogunyemi, a 'womanist' must bring racial, cultural, national, economic and political understanding to the philosophy of the movement, in addition to sensitivity to sexual issues. (21) In this case, it is useful to dwell on why many black women writers cannot be feminists like their white counterparts and the differences between them. Ogunyemi claims that "African and African-American women writers, despite their differences, have shared aesthetic attitudes." (22) Because of their race, both groups are different from white feminists, and both groups have historically been dominated by Western culture.

Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi gives the following examples from African and African-American literature that reflects the 'womanist' literary approach: Bessie Head's *When Rain Clouds Gather*, *Maru* and *A Question of Power* (South Africa); Flora Nwapa's novels *Idu* and *One*

is Enough (Nigeria); Mariama Ba's *So Long A Letter* (Senegal); Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* (Ghana). In African-American literature, Toni Morrison's novels *The Bluest Eye* and *Song of Solomon*; Alice Walker's *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* and *The Color Purple*. (22)

Ogunyemi approaches the concept of 'womanism' from a different perspective than Alice Walker and Hudson-Weems. Ogunyemi, who described her previous works as 'womanism', focused on the concept of 'African womanism' with her work *Afrika Wo/Man Palava The Nigerian Novel* by Women (1996). Ogunyemi defines African womanism as "a black and natural consequence of feminism".

Therefore, similar to Walker, African womanism does not see feminism as distant. However, unlike Walker, she clearly draws an image that shares common ground with feminism by emphasizing the priority of "women's freedom and independence, like feminism" ("Womanism" 65). However, the fundamental difference between feminism and African womanism is "how both theories view patriarchy and how it can be changed as a method."(69) Similar to Alice Walker's approach, Ogunyemi sees African womanism as an extension of feminism: "a 'womanist' should

collaborate on racial, cultural, national, economic and political issues, as well as on sexual issues." (African Wo/Man Palava 114). As understood from the quote, Ogunyemi's definition of 'African womanism' is based on the idea that other contexts that can provide solutions to African women's other problems can also be used to solve gender and female identity issues.

By focusing on the needs of African women, Ogunyemi has created a wider field of action for herself than Walker's 'race, class, society, gender' approach. Ogunyemi expresses her broader view with the 10-item definition of womanism in her article "Did Anybody Disappear?" and the related areas of the concept in question.

> 1. Global capitalism and consumerism that impoverishes the poor; 2. Racial (national) political economy; 3. Feminisms and other imperialisms - postcolonial efforts in collaboration with the global sisterhood; 4. Inter-ethnic conflict and ethnic cleansing; 5. Fundamentalism - traditional religions of Africa, Islam and Christianity; 6. Elitism - military tutelage and feudalism; 7. Language problem; 8. Gender restrictions; 9. Gerontocracy; 10. Other cultural restrictions. (4)

With the definition above, Ogunyemi clearly articulates the points where African womanism differs from Western-White feminism, and she articulates this distinction more clearly than Alice Walker:

> As a woman, knowing that she is disenfranchised because of her own private hardships, as well as because of the European-American patriarchy in the public sphere and the black sexist attitudes in the domestic sphere; seeing that she is powerless and oppressed in the world in which she lives as a member of a race, of color; it is impossible for a black woman novelist to engage in a self-sacrificing fight against patriarchy with white feminists. Because she is a womanist by her own 'racial and sexual' position." ("Womanism" 79)

In this context, Ogunyemi also states that, like radical feminism, African womanism is also "separatist." Radical feminism has caused a separation in the women's movement by setting different goals for themselves "sexually" and African feminism "both sexually and racially." ("Womanism" 71) As can be understood, Ogunyemi's African womanism is neither as rigid as Hudson Weems's African womanism, which does not even want to hear the name of feminism, nor is it as reticent to lean towards African culture

and locality as Alice Walker's womanism. Another point where Ogunyemi differs sharply from Alice Walker is her attitude towards lesbian relationships. While Alice Walker points out that a woman can love another woman sexually, Ogunyemi states that African womanism rejects lesbian relationships and has more pressing issues to deal with. (*Africa Wo/Man Palava* 133) Another important point where Ogunyemi differs from Walker is the value he places on the concept of "motherhood": "Another point where we differ from Walker's view is the Africans' fondness for having children." (133) Ogunyemi thinks that Walker does not give enough space to the concept of 'motherhood'. However, motherhood is of great importance in the lives of African women. African women want to have many children, and when conceptualizing African women's literature and talking about works, it is impossible not to mention the concept of 'motherhood'. According to Ogunyemi, when defining African womanism, attention should be paid to "embracing African women, giving importance to motherhood, and being related to situations and problems related to the family, society and nation". (*Africa Wo/Man Palava* 114) Ogunyemi explains another point where she differs from Walker as follows:

We cannot impose the African American situation and priorities on Africa, because Africa is a very large and culturally diverse continent. When thinking about womanism, I prioritize situations that do not appeal to blacks in America but are more necessary for Africans: extreme poverty, family problems, older women who oppress younger women, women who exclude or oppress their wives, or men who oppress their husbands. All of these are problems that can be interpreted from the perspective of an African womanist. (Ardnt "Of Womanism" 2)

Ogunyemi argues that African womanism, which is closely informed by African literature and culture, prioritizes African local characteristics, problems and motifs.

As deduced from Ogunyemi's views, 'motherhood' is an important experience for the female identity of African women. In traditional African social life, 'motherhood' offers women the opportunity to gain an important place in society. At this point, if we compare the value Ogunyemi gives to motherhood with Alice Walker's view; it is useful to look at Walker's article ("A Writer Because of, Not in Spite of Her Children") written for Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* (1974). In her article, Walker wanted to emphasize that having many children is not a

deficiency for writing, but on the contrary an asset, like many other female writers in Africa, by comparing Virginia Woolf and Buchi Emecheta, and stated that the opportunity of 'a room to write', which Woolf deemed necessary, was not always available to African women. Despite this, Emecheta became a successful writer not despite her children, but because of the strength and morale given by her children and their "sweet voices from behind." (Walker "A Writer Because of" 66) However, while Walker praises the African female writer, Buchi Emecheta, in the face of a Western feminist; she also once again expresses the limits of her own womanism by admitting that she "will never be a mother as devoted to her children as Emecheta" (66).

The most important factor in the decline of human rights in Africa and the triggering of individual and social collapse in society was colonialism. With colonialism, the African continent was introduced to new gender levels and thus the social situation of women in the entire geography worsened. (Arndt 55). The native African men who followed the patriarchal methods of their masters during the colonialist powers' exploitation of Africa had the opportunity to steadily establish patriarchal patterns in the daily life and culture of Africa after colonialism had

actually left the continent and thus men gained privilege in the reconstructed political, religious, economic and educational institutions. (Davies "Introduction"2)

According to Susan Arndt, "By excluding women from government, the colonial power also destroyed the social institutions in which women had more say." (55) One of the best examples of women's loss of power and status is Ifi Amadiume's work *Male Doughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*. In this work, Amadiume states that the colonial process, which he defines as occupation, severely damaged the "fluid gender structures" that had existed in Igbo culture for centuries in order to establish power and authority. (119) According to him, "new Western concepts brought to Africa through the colonial occupation process caused 'gender and class'-based inequalities that were nourished by rigid sexist ideologies and structures." (119)

Christianity also became dominant on the continent, causing the influence of women in their local religions to be shaken. Against colonialism, Igbo women started a protest movement by performing the dance called 'Nwaobiala'. The main aim of the dancing women movement that

broke out in 1925 was to ensure the abandonment of Christianity and the return to traditional customs. (120) In the incidents that spread to about three cities, the angry crowd of women burned down markets, closed the main road to traffic and occupied the courthouse. During this process, children were also forced to boycott school. (Mba 68-72) As can be seen in this action where women were at the center, African women have always struggled against the Western and Orientalist understanding that tried to oppress them and colonize their status, identity, culture and lands. The exploited African woman, who was ignored by Western-white feminists and colonialist discourse and presented to us as silenced, reacted to the exploitation and disregard of her female identity in the early 1900s, when colonialism had not yet penetrated the entire continent, without even knowing the meaning of the word feminism.

Returning to the concept of 'fluid gender structure' mentioned above, Amadiume's anthropological study of the Nnobi tribe in Igbo culture concluded that "biological sex is not considered identical with social gender" (15). For example, some women can take on the social roles of men. If an Igbo man does not have a male child and therefore an heir, he can assign his eldest daughter as his 'son'. Thus, the socially accepted

gender is taken into consideration more than the biological one. Among the Nnobi, these people, who are accepted as male daughters, can marry other women and such marriages are not associated with 'lesbianism'. Although male and female are socially accepted as male, they are not allowed to have sex with their husbands because they are not biologically male. On the other hand, in order to obtain a male heir for the continuation of the family, the spouses called female-husband are allowed to take lovers in order to have a male child, and the female child born from such relationships belongs to the female-husband. The male child is given to the father of the male-doughter as the heir of the tribe. After this stage, although the male child appears to be in control of the tribe and family, there is no strict hierarchy preventing women from having family wealth, political power and authority. (15-7). However, with the introduction of colonialism, Christianity and Western education based on Christianity, the 'gender fluidity' that women had ended and they were relegated to the position of the other. (121) Another situation that parallels the example above, where women and female identity are valued more, is seen in Buchi Emecheta's The *Joys of Motherhood*. The mother of Nnu Ego, the main character of the novel, is portrayed as someone

who is more free and has a say compared to her colonized daughter, in a position similar to the male-daughter role.

In 1986, during the Q&A session of the second African writers' conference held in Stockholm, an accusation was made against Ama Ata Aidoo and other women writers. Accordingly, she said that African women writers were disrupting the 'privacy of Africa's home' in order to show that they were feminist writers. In response to this accusation, Ama Ata Aidoo stated that they were constantly accused of importing feminism from Europe and disrupting the relationships between African women and men. In addition, Aidoo emphasized that African women were fighting for both their own rights and the welfare and goodness of society, as a legacy from the past, and once again emphasized that she rejected a feminism imported from abroad. Aidoo, who said that Africa had raised more real, traditional women warriors and protesters[11] than

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[11] In Igbo culture, women were not taxed for their economic activities. This situation continued until 1926 under the colonial administration. In 1926, two censuses were conducted to identify women in particular to be taxed. Women, who also supported their families and husbands' taxes, gathered to protest this practice, which would double their burden. The incident that dominated the Southeast of the country reached tens of thousands and engulfed the entire

many societies throughout history, stated that they would constantly resist being ignored as women who were constantly silenced and that African women also had this potential. (Petersen, Ideology 183) Aidoo says that long before feminism came to the forefront globally, African women had already developed the arguments defended by feminism and applied them to the whole of African society, without distinguishing between men and women. As inferred from Aidoo's explanation, the women's movement in Africa is more in line with womanism, especially African and Afrikana womanism, and their attitude of defending social values, anti-colonialism and cultural diversity, rather than feminism.

In the introduction to Ngambika: Studies of Women in African Literature, the famous African

region. The incidents called "Women's War" among the Igbo people were known as "Aba Rebellion" by the British. As a result of the long and increasing protests, the colonial troops resorted to arms and 55 women were killed. "Women's War" was an incident in which women were completely influential, and in these incidents, women also showed their reactions and reactions to the colonial administration that did not give them the right to education and their representatives in the country. The Women's War also shows the cooperation between Nigerian and African women and that despite all the obstacles and oppression, they can organize and speak out against colonialism. (See Heaton M. Matthew, Toyin Falola. A History of Nigeria. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.132-5.)

literary critic Carole Boyce Davies states that African literature has traditionally been under the influence of male writers and critics, particularly due to the negative impact of colonial ideology on women (1). However, in recent years, as a result of the contributions of African women writers to the field, a new generation of critics, the majority of whom are women, have begun to challenge the authority of men. (1) According to Davies, African literature and criticism focus on two points: "liberating African people from the influence of neo-colonialism, class and racial oppression, respect for African cultures, and on the other hand, the contribution of international women's movements to women's consciousness." (1)

In African literature, male and female writers approach the reflection of women's experiences and situations differently. Male writers have been accused of "portraying 'motherhood' as a symbol of national and revolutionary movements, someone who nurtures the earth, Africa, eternal beauty and eternity." (Nfah-Abbenyi 5) In other words, most of the male writers in question have been accused of romanticizing African women and portraying them as submissive, marginal, and maternal. This attitude can be seen in the works of the following male writers: Chinua Achebe- Things Fall Apart,

Okot p'Bitek- Song of Lawino, Cyprian Ekwensi – Jagua Nana, Elechi Amadi- The Concubine. Another striking aspect in the works of these male writers is that "women take on the role of a tool for the exposure and examination of men's experiences." (Davies 247). When we look at the works of women writers, we have the opportunity to see more strikingly how they liberate women from the dominant attitude of the male-dominated tradition and how they portray and highlight women, their experiences and their place in society. Similarly, women writers also oppose the definition of women's identity according to gender roles under the influence of patriarchal understanding, and the confinement of women's identity to a romantic mold, such as "happiness, success", which are similar to the endings of fairy tales for children, which are common in the works of male writers. (Davies 249)

In the following sections of the study, in the light of the theoretical and historical information emphasized, the works of Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*, Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* and Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes: A Love Story*, which cover three different periods (pre-colonialism/colonialism and post-colonialism-neo-colonialism), will be examined. The study will touch on themes such as

the effects of colonialism on African literature, culture and women's identity, the diversity of African local cultures, the African woman's struggle to become a subject (identity acquisition) in the face of the pressures of the patriarchal structure and gender structures, motherhood and neo-colonialism.

CHAPTER II: *THE JOYS OF MOTHERHOOD*: "THE COLONIZED MOTHER" NNU EGO

Buchi Emecheta's fifth novel, *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979), centers on the heart-wrenching story of a woman, Nnu Ego, who suffers under the guidance of the patriarchal Igbo society, which has undergone a change with colonialism, in order to achieve success both as a woman and as a black writer, believing that "one must be one step ahead of others in order to see the light" ("That First Novel" 122). Through Nnu Ego, Emecheta effectively reflects the oppressive and exclusionary attitude of patriarchal institutions, and the precarious, unstable and struggling situation of women in the colonial and post-colonial period in African society.

Emecheta's work generally deals with her dissatisfaction with the status of women in Igbo Culture, which she herself comes from and which she opposes through her work. In an interview with Adeola James, Emecheta describes the difficulty of articulating this situation as an African woman writer:

You have to be determined. The first person you need to convince is yourself. If it is something within you, your own truth will come out. Your truth may not be my truth. If I am Speaking my own truth the way I see it, I must be prepared to defend it. That means having that belief in yourself and being prepared to write it as you see it, then, eh hen. So I think, the greatest person to conquer is oneself. (James 45)

This personal truth can also, in a way, lead to 'political' attitudes, depending on one's class, gender or any other condition that one internalizes as one's identity. But for Emecheta, the main factor in becoming a successful writer is the financial situation and, especially for women writers, the freedom they need to be provided with in order to establish their identity as women. (*A Head Above Water* 40) According to Emecheta, most African women are economically dependent on men and this limits their creativity. Nevertheless, the literature they are trying to create reveals their own concerns and perspectives. (42)

Although she does not accept feminism[12], a term of European origin, Buchi Emecheta is one of

[12] In her speech at the conference on African women writers held in Stockholm, Buchi Emecheta stated that she draws nourishment from the daily life of Africa in her works. Buchi

the most important and prominent women writers in African women's literature and studies on this field. Many of her works present slices of life drawn from a 'womanist perspective'. The works written by women writers in African literature coincide with the post-colonial period, and the first famous African woman writer to write in English was Flora Nwapa.

Without the example of Nwapa, B. Emecheta's debut would not have been possible because " It was Nwapa who inspired Buchi Emecheta to follow in her footsteps as a writer." (Busby xiv) Emecheta's 'feminist' and 'womanist' stance is evident in many of her works, taking advantage of Flora Nwapa's inspiration and the opportunity she offered to women in African literature. Emecheta's works commonly address both the traditional attitudes that women themselves accept and the traditional attitudes that enslave and exploit them, and the negative effects

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Emecheta stated that as both a woman and an African, she observes events through the eyes of an African woman and that many African women she knows from her environment come to life in the characters in her works. By doing so, she claims that she cannot exactly be called a 'feminist' and by saying "if I am a feminist, I am an African feminist with a small 'f'" (Emecheta, "with a small 'f' 175), she wants to express that her African womanist aspect is more dominant.

of the colonization process on traditions, based on the problematic of women.

In this respect, the colonization, enslavement or marginalization of women is quite common in Emecheta's novels. Carol Boyce Davies recognizes Buchi Emecheta as a writer who devoted herself and her work to exposing the negative and evil aspects of traditions and patriarchal institutions that oppress Third World African women in Igbo society. (Ezeigbo 6) For example, *The Joy of Motherhood* (1979) deals with "the fate of an African woman caught in a dilemma" (Emenyonu 260), both in the gender roles assigned to her by the patriarchal Igbo culture and the oppression imposed by the colonial space. Some of her other novels in which indigenous culture and colonialism in Nigeria work hand in hand to deny women include: *The Bride Price* (1976) is the heartbreaking story of Aku-nna, who is forced to "accept the husband chosen for her by her people" (168). *The Slave Girl* (1977) focuses on Ogbanje Ojebeta, who as a slave was "never allowed to do what she wanted" (168), and the hardships she suffered as a result of being sold into slavery by her older brother Okolie, who succumbed to his own personal ambitions. The shocking experience of Debbie, who was repeatedly raped in the shadow of the Nigerian

civil war and "could never speak out" (136) out of shame, also forms an important point of *Destination Biafra* (1981). In addition, the semi-autobiographical *Second Class Citizen* (1974) reflects the experiences of Adah, who encounters racism, class, gender issues and discrimination more intensely when she goes to London, the center of the United Kingdom, which she considers "must be like heaven" (8).

The Joy of Motherhood by Buchi Emecheta is the story of Nnu Ego, who grows up in rural and traditional conditions. Nnu Ego finds herself in Lagos, the capital city of Nigeria, which has been introduced to industry and Western influence (colonialism). From a womanist and African womanist perspective, the colonial ideology and the patriarchal structure is considered to be the main cause of women's oppression both in colonized society and in traditional tribal life (Igbo Culture). Buchi Emecheta, a Nigerian-born writer living in London, has internalized multiculturalism. Emecheta's fiction expresses the problems and aspirations of black African women, and her contribution to the literature that African women writers have worked so hard to create is significant. Emecheta's works not only "challenge the domination of male writers" but also "the representations of African women in male-

dominated literature". (Sougou 1) Buchi Emecheta takes such a stance and presents the sexual politics and traditional roles of African women, both male-dominated and colonial discourse, through the eyes of a successful writer and observer.

As in many of Buchi Emecheta's works, in *The Joys of Motherhood[13]*, it is possible to examine the patriarchal patterns of what Kate Millet refers to as "sexual politics" through which men exploit women. According to Emecheta, Igbo society embodies male dominance and, as a result, female oppression and domination. As is common with Emecheta's female characters, the character of Nnu Ego is often sacrificed in a society of values where men dominate and their word is considered the last word. In fact, Emecheta's fame in African and postcolonial literature lies more in her loud voice for the emancipation of African women and her reaction to the notion of 'sacrifice of women to social values' in Igbo culture. (Umeh xxiv)

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[13] It is possible to deduce from her autobiographical work, A Head Above, that when Buchi Emecheta was doing her doctoral studies in sociology in England, she was influenced by Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* and reflected in her work the importance of Sexual Politics in determining the lives of her female characters in traditional life.

In Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*, the story of Nnu Ego involves a woman's attempt to realize herself through her ability to 'bear and raise children'. As a woman writer, Emecheta attempts to explain the construction of identity through the concept of 'motherhood', both because Emecheta, as a mother and a woman, has "dealt with the concepts of gender and identity in her own life" (Brown 13) and because "in the works of both male and female writers, 'motherhood' has been an important step in the construction of a woman's identity. " (Nfah-Abbenyi 35) Accordingly, it clearly shows the fact that 'motherhood' is an important concept for revealing the living conditions and social identities of African women during both the colonial and postcolonial periods.

Nnu Ego's situation is culturally and historically specific, but women in other countries that experienced colonialism are also subject to the side effects of colonial ideology that fosters the local male-dominated gender that Nnu Ego experienced. As seen, gender inequality is embedded in both the local culture and the set of values brought about by colonial culture. Both at the same time subjugated women both during the colonial period and during the liberation movements it spurred. In this respect,

Motherlands: Black Women's Writing from Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia, Susheila Nasta articulates the struggle of Third World women writers with the conventions of such representations that dominate them:

> Postcolonial women writer is not only involved in making herself heard, in changing the architecture of male-centred ideologies and languages, or in discovering new forms and language to express her experience, she also to subvert and demthologise indigenous male writings and traditions which seek to label her .(xv)

In parallel to this issue, Buchi Emecheta expresses the main factor that supports her concern and purpose in her works as follows: "The main themes of my novels are African society and the family; the historical, social and political life in Africa is seen through the events of a woman's life. I always try to show the oppression of the African man, who in turn oppresses the African woman... I try to write about Africa as a whole." (*A Nigerian Novel Living London* 115) One of the most common concepts in postcolonial/ Third World women's literature, especially in the novels covered by this thesis, is the 'double-colonization' that has been applied to Third World women from the first moment colonialism became possible.

In *The Joys of Motherhood*, Emecheta's aim, as will become clear, is to illustrate the tragedy of a woman's identity insofar as only the phenomenon of 'motherhood' is graded in terms of her ability, since anything other than 'motherhood' is a key element triggering her lifelong slavery (Davies 253). In this context, 'being a woman' is equivalent to being a mother, and Nnu Ego's suicide attempt is a reaction to the loss of this identity achieved through motherhood. Filomina Steady argues that "in traditional African society, 'motherhood' is the most important and vital role a woman can play" and adds that "even in the most strictly patriarchal societies, women are valued as 'wives', as 'mothers', because the woman's fertility is seen as a representation of her husband's future and power, and she is also the water carrier for this patriarchal order". (243) Therefore, Nnu Ego's story is about the social limitations imposed on her sexual identity and the threshold of her existence being determined by the concept of 'motherhood'. Nnu Ego's female identity is measured by her ability to be a 'mother'.

Emecheta's novels, which deal with the African Woman as a subject or as an individual trying to become a subject, act more in accordance with the aim of prioritizing the female identity, the effort to negate the representations brought to the

foreground by colonialism, and the aim that women should have a voice in postcolonial African literature.

In this context, Emecheta's effort, as can be seen in the phenomenon of motherhood in *The Joy of Motherhood*, is a response to the unrealistic figure of the woman, which Achebe and other important postcolonial male writers have made visible, reflecting the postcolonial woman as silenced and other. Another important reason for foregrounding the representations of women in African women's literature is to refute the representations in postcolonial male-dominated texts that silence and ignore women, such as colonial literary works. *The Joys of Motherhood,* as Marie Umeh puts it, is a work that deals with the sacrifice of traditional Igbo women to social values and their enslavement for the sake of these values." (47) We witness the efforts of women to find a way out of the society established within this order and to gain subjectivity.

Emecheta's purpose in writing this novel is to raise awareness in the context of 'motherhood'. *The Joy of Motherhood* began in Ibuza, a rural area of Nigeria where the impact of colonialism is much less felt and where Igbo culture is prevalent:

> Most of the events that happened before I was born had to be told to me by my mothers. The history of the British Empire and her greatness I learned from my English teachers at school in Lagos. But when it came to events that happened nearer home, concerning my ancestors and me in particular, 1 had to rely on the different versions told to me by my mothers. They never ceased to fascinate me, especially as each member of my family had a slightly different version. It was from this oral source that I learned from many angles the story of my birth. (*A Head Above Water* 6)

Emecheta tries to examine feminist/feminist tropes such as 'motherhood', 'female identity', 'gender' and the impact of patriarchal local culture that influences such concepts within the local culture. We can see this influence better by focusing on the three male characters who are influential in Nnu Ego's life (Nwokocha Agbadi, her father; Nnaife Owulum, her husband; and her eldest son Oshia). Her father represents the pre-colonial period, her husband the colonial period and her eldest son the post-colonial period. The three eras represented by these three men also help us understand the historical context of the 'colonized mother'.

Throughout the novel, Nnu Ego is aware that her life will invariably be one of dependence on men: "Even in death, Nwokocha Agbadi ruled his daughter. She belonged to both men, her father and her husband, and lastly to her sons." (185) At the end of the novel, Nnu Ego brings to the forefront the negative aspects of being dependent on men, such as competition in the polygamy system, being a slave to the desires of boys, and discriminatory and indifferent attitudes towards girls. Emecheta's vision and effort is to expose discriminatory attitudes towards women. Nnu Ego himself encourages his daughters to sacrifice for the education of their brothers, but ultimately suffers for it: "God, when will you create a woman who will be fulfilled in herself, a full human being, not anybody's appendage? (186) Nnu Ego has disrupted the education of girls when it was necessary for the education of her sons Oshia and Adim. However, given the patriarchal social structure in which the male child is glorified, both sons went to America and Canada to continue their education and did not ask for their mother until they received the news of Nnu Ego's death. This example parallels the situation of Nhamo in the novel *Nervous Conditions*, who realizes the privilege of being a man and tries to oppress his

sister Tambudzai with the gender-based privilege he has gained.

Colonialism is an important phenomenon as it is a factor that shapes Nnu Ego's life and enables her to practice traditional gender roles. As can be seen, the social roles fostered by colonialism are behind Nnu Ego's devoting all her efforts to her 'motherhood' identity. Colonialism causes Nnu Ego to lose her identity as a woman and adopt an asexual identity under the influence of the role of 'motherhood'. When Nnu Ego compares her father to Nnaife, we witness her critical evaluations as a kind of observer of colonialism. He draws attention to the difference between his father's pre-colonial situation and Nnaife, who is forced by colonialism to do the white woman's laundry, and shows us the impossibility of a romantic love between them. The male characters throughout the novel have difficulty in maintaining their self-esteem and take on slave-like roles that are deemed appropriate by their colonial masters. This slave-like division of labor also finds itself in combination with a sexist coding. Because colonialism also drags male characters into the lines of work expected of women in the Western World. For example, Nnu Ego looks at Nnaife with disgust because she works for Mrs. Meers. Because her husband has turned into "a man who

washes women's underwear. A man indeed!" (49) For a woman like Nnu Ego, who has internalized the traditional gender system that prescribes the superiority of men over women, it is degrading for her to see her husband, whom she considers superior, inferior to a white woman, and this situation is again an important proof that colonialism hurt the dominant influence of men on the continent, especially in the public sphere.

Emecheta articulates the process of colonization of Africa through the dissolution of traditional gender roles and hierarchy, so that when it comes to white color and culture, the black man is inferior to the woman. While Nnu Ego desires a man, colonialism deprives her of this and turns her into a sexually deprived and disinterested, ineffectual wife. When Nnu Ego experiences the ecstasy of pregnancy for the first time, it shows how much white people have changed the lives of these colonized people. When she reveals her joy to Nnaife after a long period of abstinence, her husband advises her to be discreet and secretive about her joy because it would not be good if her master found out that she did not marry like a Christian in the church, and this infuriates Nnu Ego, showing her anger at colonialism and African men like Nnaife: "You behave like a slave! Do you go to her and say, 'Please, madam

crawcraw-skin, can I sleepwith my wife today?'
Do you make sure the stinking underpants she
wears are well washed and pressed before you
come and touch me? Me, Nnu Ego, the daughter of
Agbadi of Ibuza. Oh, shame on you! " (50) By Nnu
Ego's acceptance to be with someone like Nnaife,
whom he despises and finds ugly, Emecheta
emphasizes the importance of childbearing in
traditional, patriarchal Igbo culture and the dignity
it brings to society. Having a child is not only Nnu
Ego's personal longing and desire, but also a sign
of her achievement of her own womanhood and
identity as a woman. (Chukwuma 5) Nnu Ego's
reaction to Nnaife's ineffective and cowardly
behavior towards her colonial bosses is motivated
by the lack of support for Afrikana womanism or
African womanism. Nnu Ego, who exhibits a
behavior characteristic of African womanism that
demands the partnership and help of men against
the colonial understanding, is disappointed
because she does not receive enough support. For
Nnu Ego, the daughter of Agbadi, the leader of the
village where she was born, living with such a man
who washes white women's underwear is a
humiliating situation, but her longing for
"motherhood" makes her endure this situation.
Only when she gives birth to a child and has a son
will her existence be complete: "Nnu Ego smiled

weakly. I know what you mean. Girls are love babies. But, you see, only now with this son am I going to start loving this man. He has made me into a real Woman- all I want to be a Woman and a mother. So why should I hate him now?" (53) The traditional values imposed on Nnu Ego by society place an incredible burden on her.

Nnu Ego is aware that once they have more children, she will not have the economic means to feed them. But she is also aware that her identity as a mother will give her enough credibility in patriarchal and colonial-dominated Lagos that Nnu Ego constantly prays: "Please, God, let this child stay with me and fulfill all these my future hopes and joys." (79) It is therefore not surprising that in the first part of the novel, Nnu Ego goes mad with grief and attempts suicide because her son Ngozi dies in his sleep. This is a failure for her because the only living being to whom she can prove her womanhood is no longer alive. Since being a mother means to exist for a woman in Igbo culture, Nnu Ego symbolically thinks that she is already dead: "But I am not a Woman any more! I am not a mother any more. The child is there, dead on the mat. My (chi[14]) has taken him away from

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[14] The concept of chi can be defined in Igbo culture as a kind of 'personal destiny or higher self' that greatly influences the lives of Igbo people.

me. I only want to go in there and meet her." (62) Emecheta here shows Nnu Ego's desperate state of mind and the pressure this puts on her, her family and the community as she is childless. Nevertheless, if one looks at this situation through the lens of African womanism or Afrikana womanism, the unity and existence of the community is essential and in Africa everyone is responsible for each other, and this is what allowed Nnu Ego to be persuaded by the community to save her life. Nnu Ego was prevented from ending her life because this is not acceptable in African societies: "After all, It's her life. However, a thing like that is not permitted in Nigeria."(60) According to these African-centered theories of women, negative events that happen to individuals or disruptions in society are resolved through cooperation. In line with the importance of motherhood in African cultures, Nnu Ego, who has not yet succeeded in becoming a mother, is expected to regain her identity as a woman, serve her husband and fulfill the roles assigned to her by society. Therefore, attempted suicide is not acceptable to the patriarchal-colonialist structure because by committing suicide Nnu Ego is also rebelling against this structure.

When Nnu Ego becomes pregnant for the second time, because of the risk of miscarriage,

she suspends all commercial activities in which she is involved in order to make a living, and sends herself the following message: "Money and children do not go together." (80) Nnu Ego thinks that by having children he will complete his identity in the future. By giving the heroine many children, Emecheta emphasizes Nnu Ego's traditional condition in a modern industrial space. (Compared to Mainini (the protagonist, Tambudzai's mother, who has internalized the traditional social roles of women) in *Nervous Conditions*, Nnu Ego is willing to risk economic deprivation and confinement at the expense of gaining her identity because being a mother is being, and how much she wants motherhood is better expressed in the following words, which also point to the patriarchal-colonial order: "The voices of all the people who knew them had said she deserved this child. The voices of the gods had said so too, as her father had confirmed to her in his messages. She might not have any money to supplement her husband's income, but were they not in a 'White Man's' world where it was the duty of the father to provide for his family? (81) In contrast to her life in pre-colonial Ibuza, where the traditional order was intensely lived and the woman entered the economic life and cooperated with the man, Nnu Ego's cigarette selling, which

she had to give up in Lagos, where the colonial-patriarchal understanding that "this new setting robbed the Woman of her useful role" (81) by making the man "the sole provider" (81) is more intensely felt, leads to a worsening of her situation in the future.

In the novel, as Nnu Ego prioritizes motherhood, we are confronted with the painful poverty of her family. This is better understood in the example of the clothes Oshia needs. It is true that "She sold all her clothes at a fraction of their cost to the Fulani Street-Walkers, telling herself that if her sons should live and grow, they would be all the clothes she would ever need." (104) As Emecheta emphasizes, Nnu Ego is trapped in an economically subalternized situation with her first son Oshia, who managed to survive when her husband Nnaife lost his job when his colonial boss returned to England for the second world war, worked on a ship for a while and then was sent to India to fight in the war on the British side. Previously subjected to 'double colonization' due to her status as a woman and exploited, Nnu Ego faces triple colonization due to her economic deprivation. In Igbo culture, male children are preferred over female children, in line with the traditional patriarchal society. The patriarchal-social institution that emerges from this

perspective affects women's lives from childhood onwards.

As seen in the example of Nnu Ego, a mother must both give birth to children and have male children in order to be respected as a 'sufficient mother'. Therefore, in Igbo society, the status of a woman is not only determined by how many children she has, but also by the gender of the children. Consequently, every woman wants a male child and the meaning attributed to a male child is indicated by the mother's calling her by the name of her male child. For example, in order to indicate that Nnu Ego has a male child, she is called " Mama Oshia". (103) Thus, according to the social rules in the patriarchal-Igbo culture, the woman's identity is given by her own son. Since Igbo women are brought up to learn that more importance is given to a male child, the importance and happiness of a male child can be understood from another speech by Nnu Ego: "I know what you mean, Girls are love babies. But, you see, only now with this son am I going to start loving this man. He has made me into a real Woman- all I want to be a woman and a mother." (53) As seen, Nnu Ego is experiencing the joy of self-actualization and is now ready to love Nnaife, chosen by her father Agbadi, who has given her a female identity.

When a boy cannot have a child, Igbo society adopts an exclusionary and alienating attitude towards women. Adaku, who inherited from Nnaife's deceased brother, criticizes the unfair attitude towards women who cannot have a boy while talking to Nnu Ego: "The way they go on about it one would think I know where sons are made and have been neglectful about taking one for my husband." (169) According to Adaku's comment, while society emphasizes the importance of a boy, it also alienates and discredits a girl, but according to Adaku, the family name cannot be sustained without women. A similar situation can be seen in the attitude of the elders who gathered together because of Adaku's problem with Nnu Ego. Nnu Ego was considered more privileged because Adaku was not a mother of a boy. Adaku was fully aware that she was not being taken into consideration. They did not want Nnu Ego to apologize to her. […] the message was clear: "She was only a lodger, her poistion in Nnaife Owulum's household had not been ratified nor did the fact that she was making a lot of particularly endear her to them, she got the message."(167)Adaku thus felt that she had not fulfilled her duty as a woman because she had not had a son. Rather than trying to resolve the issue between Adaku and Nnu Ego, the family elders

supported Nnu Ego because she had a son, while ostracizing Adaku.

In Igbo culture, the status of men transforms many aspects of life into a gendered area. There is a perception that men are the source of light in society while women are their shadows. In other words, women live their lives as the other of men. Children are brought up to be aware of this fact when they are still young. For example, Agbadi (Nnu Ego's father) raises his own children according to the gender roles of men and women: "My sons, you will grow up to be kings among men. […]My daughters, you will all grow to rock your children's children." (29) Agbadi's words are one of the most obvious examples of gender inequality. While women are expected to take care of the household chores, men are considered worthy of the privileges afforded to kings.

When Nnu Ego has twin girls, she worries that her husband will not be happy with her. As expected, when she sees them, she asks: "Nnu Ego, what are these?" (127) Nnu Ego realizes that she still lives in a male-dominated world. Accordingly, when she loses her one-week-old baby boy to a seizure, she experiences a very bad psychology; when Oshia consoles her with Dumbi (Nnaife's stepdaughter from her elder brother), Nnu Ego

emphasizes that her dead son is "worth more than ten Dumbis" because Dumbi is only a girl. (128)

> "God, when will you create a woman who will be fulfilled in herself, a full human being, not anybody's appendage?" she prayed desperately. "After all, I was born alone, and I shall die alone. What have I gained from all this? Yes, I have many children, but what do I have to feed them on? On my life. I have to work myself to the bone to look after them, I have to give them my all. And if I am lucky enough to die in peace, I even have to give them my soul. They will worship my dead spirit to provide for them: it will be hailed as a good spirit so long as there are plenty of yams and children in the family, but if anything should go wrong, if a young wife does not conceive or there is a famine, my dead spirit will be blamed. When will I be free?" But even in her confusion she knew the answer: "Never, not even in death. I am a prisoner of my own flesh and blood. Is it such an enviable position? The men make it look as if we must aspire for children or die. That's why when I lost my first son I wanted to die, because I failed to live up to the standard expected of me by the males in my life, my father and my husband---and now I have to include my sons. But who made the law that we should not hope in our daughters? We women subscribe to that law

more than anyone. Until we change all this, it is still a man's world, which women will always help to build." (186-187)

Shortly after this incident, when Emecheta wanted to put an end to the arguments between the two women about the fact that the money was not enough for Nnaife by tearing the three-pound coin into pieces, Nnu Ego expressed that she was still subjected to a weak treatment in this marriage:

On her way back to their room, it occurred to Nnu Ego that she was a prisoner, imprisoned by her love for her children, imprisoned in her role as the senior wife. She was not even expected to demand more money for her family; that was considered below the standard expected of a woman in her position. It was not fair, she felt, the way men cleverly used a woman's sense of responsibility to actually enslave her. They knew that a traditional wife like herself would never dream of leaving her children. Nnu Ego tried to imagine her father's face if she were to return to his house and claim ill-treatment by Nnaife; she would be chased in disgrace back to her responsibility. At home in Ibuza she would have had her own hut and would at least have been treated as befitting her position, but here in Lagos, where she was faced with the harsh reality of making

ends meet on a pittance, was it right for her husband to refer to her responsibility? It seemed that all she had inherited from her agrarian background was the responsibility and none of the booty. Well, even though she had now given in and admitted defeat, she was going to point this out to Nnaife that very evening when he came home from work. With that final decision, confidence sprang inside her like water from below the ground and seemed to wash away her gloomy thoughts with its clear, sparkling gush. (137)

Nnu Ego does not have the opportunity to share this trouble with Nnaife because Nnaife is sent to Burma to fight in the Second World War on behalf of the British army. Traditional values in a modern world are one of the most important themes of *The Joys of Motherhood*. Nnu-Ego left Ibuza and took many aspects of the lifestyle in Lagos, but never the cultural values. Nnu Ego thinks that she can gain the ability to live economically through her children. As a traditional woman from Ibuza, she lost her children in a modern industrial society like Lagos. (*The Joys of Motherhood* 81) Due to this attitude, she not only lost her first son, but also lost her life for the same reason. Since Nnu Ego still lives by traditional values, she expects her children to

acquire these values. When she sees that her children will not be able to take care of her as required by modern life when she gets old, she is greatly disappointed.

In this novel, Emecheta also foresees the necessity and importance of education for African women. Emecheta believes that change should be initiated by women. In her work *The Joy of Motherhood*, as mentioned earlier, there are three important characters who start from Ibuza and settle in Lagos. These characters - Nnu Ego, Nnaife and Adaku - face the same challenges but their ways of dealing with these situations are different. Of this trio, only Adaku makes a radical break with tradition.

Nnaife, like Adaku, embraces modern life but also adopts traditional ideas that suit him. Only Nnu-Ego tries to survive in modern Lagos by clinging to traditional values. As seen, Emecheta brings to the forefront important problems such as double colonization, othering and the fact that women's identity can only be achieved through motherhood, with a 'womanist' approach to Nigerian society. In the following section, the experinece of 'new African woman' and the importance of education for African women's identity acquisition will be examined. As the central character of the novel, *Nervous conditions*,

Tambudzai will discussed whether she succeeds in achieving a female identity against both the male-dominant colonial understanding and the patriarchal, local Shona culture and to what extent she is exposed to 'nervous conditions' in this process will be underlined.

CHAPTER III: *NERVOUS CONDITIONS*: "THE BIRTH OF NEW AFRICAN WOMAN": TAMBUDZAI

Following Buchi Emecheta's *Joys of Motherhood*, in which she effectively reflects the oppressive and exclusionary attitude of patriarchal institutions and the unstable, unstable, struggling to gain a social identity of women in the African society during the colonial period, this section deals with the novel, *Nervous Conditions* (1988) by Tsitsi Dangarembga, one of the important Zimbabwean women writers. In this novel, Tsitsi Dangarembga exposes the contrasts and collisions of patriarchy and colonialism that provide a context for Zimbabwean women to perceive their changing roles and identities. Dangarembga conveys such themes through the eyes of a young woman who is maturing, growing up and, in particular, beginning to perceive the patriarchal formation within her traditional structure and the familial and social forces that control family life. This young woman, according to the reflections in the story, is a Zimbabwean girl named Tambudzai. Tambu's family is a symbolic structure of the patriarchal system. This system is one of the situations that cause the " nervous conditions" to which the characters in the novel are exposed. As the title of the novel suggests, it is a sign

of rebellion. In the preface to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, Jean-Paul Sartre aims to explain the underlying causes of revolutions in colonized African states. This explanation is addressed to European readers who deny their role in not only creating the climate for revolutions, but also in fomenting them. As Sartre explains, the "condition of the native" is a "nervous conditions" introduced and maintained by those who settle among the colonized people." Fanon describes a state of "mental illness" and "double consciousness" brought about by the uninvited, coercive demands of colonial rule. (20)

As long as the colonial order persists, the psychological breakdown of the colonized, described above by Fanon and Sartre, deepens and remains in effect until the colonized is freed from the colonial order that puts them in "nervous situations". Similarly, in traditional patriarchal societies, women were restless "natives" because they were aware that they had no say over their own lives. In line with Sartre's trajectory, as Dangarembga emphasizes, it is partly because of the patriarchal system that women's work in life has been disregarded and women have experienced these "nervous conditions".

Through, *Nervous Conditions*, Tsitsi Dangarembga depicts male and female characters in such a way that they can somehow interact. In colonial Zimbabwe, the limited roles assigned to women in the

patriarchal order indirectly triggered by colonialism and the obstacles in front of Tambudzai, who tries to develop her own female identity and cultural identity through education, are reflected by her mother, who reflects the uneducated female character of a generation before her:

> "This business of womenhood is a heavy burden,' she said.' How could it not be? Aren't we the ones who bear children? When it is like that you can't decide today I want to do this, tomorrow I want to do that, the next day I want to be educated! When there are sacrifices to be made, you are the one who has to make them. And these things are not easy; you have to start learning them early, from a very early age. The earlier the better so that it is easy later on Easy! As if it is every easy. And these days it is worse, wşth the poverty of blackness on one side and the weight of womanhood on the other Aiwa! What will help you, my child, is to learn to carry your burdens with strength.' (16)

Considering the quote above from *Nervous Conditions*, Tsitsi Dangarembga, elaborates on the traditional roles, assumptions and options for oppression that limit women in Zimbabwean society, both as a result of their female social gender and their black colore, which reflects their

race and identity. As noted above, many African women suffer the burden of race, class and gender oppression. In the early part of the novel, Tambudzai gets the education she deserves only after her brother Nhamo dies of a stroke, since only the male child of the house is entitled to an education. Since she has no other brother, modern western-style education is suddenly made possible for Tambu.

Nearly in every spaces of family life, women are always exposed to oppression. The African woman is still raised under heavy expectations. A woman was traditionally expected to submit to all her husband's wishes. Moreover, she is still considered to be part of her husband's property. These perceptions are reflected in African literature. For example, the father of Tambu mocks his daughter, Tambu, for her insistence to continue her education by saying that the only role she should assume for the future is to be a wife and mother in marriage: "Can you cook your books and feed them to your husband? Stay at home with your mother and learn to cook and clean. Grow vegetables". (15)

In *Nervous Conditions*, Dangarembga's female characters expose the patriarchal, social injustices that harm them. The main character, Tambudzai Sigauke, struggles to make a place for

herself in a society oppressed by both patriarchal and colonial dynamics. In the story, the narrative presents us with 'colonial education', 'missionary schools', the conflict between 'tradition' and 'modernity', 'western lifestyle', and 'gender relations' (Willey and Treiber xii). It would be useful to give a brief overview of the history and social structure of the geography in which the story of this work of postcolonial literature, which centers on women and deals with the colonial period, is set. The country and geography known today as Zimbabwe has been composed of different communities throughout history. Many ethnic groups have inhabited this land long before colonialism began in the 1930s. The largest ethnic population in Zimbabwe is the Shona-speaking people, who have been the majority in the country since the 15th century. (Zhuwara 11) The black population in Zimbabwe of all ethnic groups was estimated at around 1 million by 1931, and by the 1950s the black population had reached three million. (Meredith 115)

People of the Shona culture were more interested in agriculture and sold rice and maize to white settlers in the early twentieth century. (Hill 45) Towards the end of the 19th century, white settlers came from England, South Africa and Portugal. The white population grew from around

5,000 in 1896 to 48,000 by 1931. (Meredith 115) Black Zimbabweans began writing in English during the colonial period in 19502. Compared to African countries such as Nigeria and Ghana, blacks in Zimbabwe were late to be introduced to literary activities because colonial rule did not begin until 1945. (Zhuwarara 17)

Another important source that will be employed while analyzing *Nervous conditions* is Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1968). Although Fanon shared his observations from the perspective of a psychiatrist in Algeria, a French colony, these views are engraved in the memory of every people who were introduced to colonialism. The work highlights themes such as violence, problems of culture and identity of the colonized, colonial education and nationalism. The country and geography known today as Zimbabwe has been made up of different communities throughout history. Many ethnic groups had lived in Zimbabwe long before colonialism began in the 1930s. The largest ethnic population in Zimbabwe is the Shona-speaking people, who have been the majority in the country since the 15th century. (Zhuwara 11) Of all ethnic groups, the Black population in Zimbabwe was estimated to be around 1 million by 1931 and by the 1950s the

Black population had grown to 3 millions people. (Meredith 115)

In an interview with Kirsten Holst Petersen and Flora Veit-Wild, Dangarembga, who tries to reflect the colonial-patriarchal Shona culture's view of women by placing the female character at the center of her work, lists her thoughts on feminism as follows:

> I used to feel connected to the Western model of feminism, but this approach to the problems between men and women is exactly the divide and rule model for my culture and for Black people in the US who are in the same situation as me... [W]omen in Zimbabwe are wary of being labeled as feminists. Absolutely, it's a very repulsive word. (Holst Petersen 347)

In her words above, Dangarembga is more likely to adopt a more womanist and African culture-centered approach to African womanism because, according to Dangarembga, such theoretical approaches better express the subalternized position of the impoverished black African woman who is subjected to double colonization: "White Western feminism cannot fully express my experiences and problems as a Black woman. In comparison, Black American

women writers are more in touch with my problems." (Veit- Wild 106)

The novel covers the period between the 1960s and 1970s, the period before Zimbabwe's independence, the colonial period. It deals with oppression based on race, class and gender in African societies, as it affects the lives of many African women. As hooks puts it, "privileged feminists often cannot talk to women from diverse groups because they either do not understand or do not take seriously the relationship between race, class and gender." (14) Dangarembga, in line with what hooks mentions, did not feed on the privileged white-middle class feminist movement; she effectively reflected the women-based problems (economic, socio-political, cultural oppression of colonialism) of her own geography and culture because she lived in colonial Zimbabwe with the eyes of an African womanist.

In Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth,* the exploited subject must create a new literature that will clash against the exploitative literature, refute its theses and reflect its own representations in order to "raise th level of the national consciousness, and to detribalize and unite the nation". (173) In *Nervous Conditions*, which reflects the symbolic voice of the colonized

subject, Tsitsi Dangarembga emphasizes the local, social and historical (reflecting the colonial period) values of African literature to the reader during the narrator and protagonist Tambudzai's "journey towards the inner values" (*The Wretched* 149) of her people in her quest to become a subject with her female identity. Based on Fanon's views, the work deals with concepts such as colonialism and colonial patriarchal discourse together with the women's issue. In this context, *Nervous Conditions* allows us to examine the struggle of two young women (Tambudzai and Nyasha) against the colonial and patriarchal society to gain a female identity. Since the work reflects Tambudzai's experiences of escape from patriarchal oppression, poverty and self-realization, it is worth evaluating from a 'womanist' perspective. In this respect, Ogunyemi makes the following observation as if emphasizing an important aspect of the book: "The black woman is not powerless in her black world as the white woman is powerless in her white world; the black woman, who is less protected than the white woman, needs to grow independently." (73) Tambudzai is in a similar situation, she needs freedom and self-confidence to develop herself.

Tambudzai's brave and determined stance also reinforces the novel's relationship with

womanism. Tambudzai is able to challenge the authoritarian, patriarchal structures that stand in the way of her personal development. In a patriarchal society, especially in the Zimbabwean society of the 1960s, which, along with colonialism, could subject women to 'double colonization', Tambudzai has to be brave to achieve her goal. Similarly, in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982), the character, Celie defies societal expectations with courage and determination and lives her life happily. As Walker says in her definition of womanism, a womanist attitude requires wanting more and digging deeper into what is shown as good. This can be exemplified by Tambudzai's desire and determination to get an education. In order to get an education and develop herself, she must first overcome race, class and gender-related oppression because Tambudzai was denied the right to attend school due to the poverty of her colonial family and sexist attitudes. Therefore, Tambudzai tries to overcome the obstacles that deny her the right to education, for example, she wants to continue her education by planting and selling maize to pay for school. This shows that she is a free-spirited and strong woman at a young age.

On the very first page of the work, Tambudzai states: "For though the event of my brother's passing and the events of my story cannot be separated, my story is not after all about death, but about my escape and Lucia's; about my mother's and Maiguru's entrapment". (1) The novel foregrounds the issues of entrapment and escape that the female character is subjected to. While female characters such as Tambudzai and Lucia are able to escape the patriarchal and colonial system of oppression, female characters such as Maiguru (Tambudzai's sister-in-law), Mainini (Tambudzai's mother) and Nyasha (Tambudzai's cousin) are trapped in the patriarchal-colonial trap despite their resistance to escape. Nyasha, Tambudzai's cousin, is torn between two cultures (Shona and English), whereas Tambudzai is attached to his Shona roots. Nyasha cannot fully commit to either culture. Therefore, she could not make her voice heard and she could not free herself from the obstacles due to the problem with her roots. As a woman, Tambudzai sacrificed her African culture and identity on her way to freedom. Tambudzai symbolizes the birth of the free Zimbabwean woman by feeding on her culture with her African womanist stance and looking at the problems of her society in a holistic way.

Since Tambudzai lives in a society dominated by colonialism, one can see how colonialism oppresses her and the other women around her. The extent to which Tambudzai's awareness is heightened as she reacts to this dual oppression can be seen in her resistance to her uncle Babamukuru, who organizes a Western-style wedding for Tambudzai's parents in order to "get in good with" the colonial authority. This led Tambudzai to question Babamukuru and the patriarchal and colonial structure to which he owed his power. As it can be understood, patriarchal domination is fed by the colonial system where colonial and patriarchal oppression trigger each other. The economic situation is another issue affecting Tambudzai and his family. Her mother, Mainini, describes their situation as follows: "[…] and these days it is worse, with the poverty of blackness on one side and the weight of womanhood on the other Aiwa!".(16) In the case of Tambudzai's family, Dangarembga also reveals the imbalances and inequalities that arise as a result of economic pressures. This is due to people being under the influence of racist and sexist attitudes. Hooks explains the isolation of black women in this regard as follows:

> For obvious reasons, bourgeois white women interested in women's rights are

satisfied with simple definitions. When put in the same category as women who have been verbally oppressed, they seem less eager to draw attention to privileges based on race and class. (18)

As can be seen, issues of race and class affect the female characters in *Nervous Conditions.*

Another feature of Dangarembga's novel that is heavily 'womanist' is that some of the oppressions caused by an oppressive male character like Babamukuru are not portrayed too negatively. This is due to the fact that Babamukuru is caught between Shona and English cultures because he has to show loyalty to both. According to Ogunyemi, "Black women lack advantages in several ways. As black, they are, along with men, victims of white patriarchal culture."(68) Ogunyemi emphasizes that men are also oppressed because of their race and calls for an alliance between black women and men. Babamukuru, the most powerful patriarchal character in the novel, is far from being in favor of such an alliance because Babamukuru submits to the pressures of the colonialist-white rulers for fear of losing his privileged condition if he does not do what is expected of him as someone who reflects the indirect influence of the exploitative

understanding within the colonial-patriarchal space.

The issue of identity is one of the leading themes of *Nervous Conditions*. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin argue that identity-related cultural problems (crises) stem from the process of colonization:

> A valid and active sense of self may have been eroded by *dislocation*, resulting from migration, the experience of enslavement, transportation, or 'voluntary' removal for indentured labour. Or it may have been destroyed by *cultural denigration*, the conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model. (*Writes Back* 9)

The above situation is in many ways associated with Tambudzai, Babamukuru and Nyasha. They have been subjected to the effects of colonialism, with a certain degree of detachment from their own culture, and have been made to believe that they and their people are inferior, more primitive. Definitely, it is highly likely that the 'sense of self' of each character exposed to this situation is also damaged. According to postcolonial theorists, the colonizer is known for imposing his or her own identity by undermining

the true, authentic identity of the colonized. According to Frantz Fanon, "His (the Negro's[15]) traditions and the resources on which they were based were destroyed because these traditions were in conflict with a civilization unknown to the Negro and imposed upon him." (*Black Skin* 83) If we look at the characters in the novel, the self-perception of exploited people is highly affected by such situations. For example, Babamukuru and Nyasha are caught between two cultures because they cannot decide which culture they are closer to and are struggling to establish their own sense of identity. Moreover, Nyasha and Babamukuru are hybrids in many ways. Although Tambudzai reflects her hybridity at times, she has maintained a good balance between her indigenous culture and the colonial culture. She is aware of her 'sense of self' and 'identity' as an African woman. For

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[15] When Frantz Fanon talks about the colonized object *in Black Skin, White Masks*, the term 'negro' is a stereotypical characterization of the colonized by white culture and ideology. The interpellation, as 'negro' is emphasized by Fanon in order to better express the dehumanizing, degrading and dark perception of the colonized by the white, colonial discourse, just like in J. Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and to indicate the place of the colonized object in the perceptual world of white people. See (Fanon, Frantz. "The Fact of Blackness." *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*. Ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. New York: Routledge, 2003. 323-6.)

example, while Tambudzai benefits from the western education of the colonial period, she is also aware of the exclusionary, enslaving effect of colonialism. In contrast to Tambudzai, Babamukuru, influenced by colonial British education, and her daughter Nyasha, having spent some time in the UK during her postgraduate studies and grew up there, have failed to negotiate what Homi K. Bobha calls "the fractured space or third space" that exists for them in the two existing cultures. (154) Babamukuru and Nyasha have failed to reconcile British and indigenous Shona cultures and to achieve a hybrid identity through the merging of both cultures in a third space. Babamukuru and Nyasha both experience ambivalence that is characterized as "a state of both desire and aversion to colonial discourse" by Bhabha (Ashcroft *The Key Concepts*, 10), unlike Tambudzai, who remains in touch with his roots, overcome their own 'tense situation' and display a culturally in-between position. Understandably, the situation of colonized people is complicated because the process of colonization also leads to the atrophy of their sense of self, psychological structure and sense of belonging.

In the preface to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, Sartre describes this situation as 'nervous conditions': "The condition of the native is a

nervous condition." (17) This situation, which Fanon also indirectly mentions in his work, points to the racial and colonial oppression that leads to psychological and emotional disturbance in the colonized. Nyasha, who suffered from a disorder as a result of the situation in question, explains how colonialism disrupted her psychological structure as follows: "I am not one of them, but I am not one of you either." (201) In the novel, one can observe many attitudes that reflect this 'tense situation' resulting from the psychological and emotional damage caused by colonialism. In *The Wrecthed of the Earth* and *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon also debunked the colonial idea that exploited people would not suffer from 'physical discomfort'. Tambudzai gives the following example of Nyasha's illness: "The psychiatrist said that Nyasha could not be sick and that Africans, as far as they observed, could not get sick." (201) This example reflects the narrow and stereotypical thinking of the colonial understanding stemming from 'othering'.

Nervous Conditions is also an important work in terms of exemplifying how Shona culture views girls and boys and how it approaches both genders. In both of the works we have analyzed so far, girls are given importance in their upbringing to the extent that they meet the needs of patriarchal

societies. In a significant part of *Nervous Conditions*, as can be seen in *The Joy of Motherhood*, the way a girl is raised determines how she will be treated by men. This suggests that certain upbringings can render girls powerless against boys. For example, Tambudzai's sister, Netsai, was brought up to be so ineffective and repressed that her intellectual world, educationally and otherwise, is very limited compared to Tambudzai, and her life consists of serving men. Moreover, it is highly likely that other young men who see girls being raised in this way will be influenced by it. The best example is Tambudzai's brother, Nhamo. Nhamo reflects the view that girls should be humiliated. This is better illustrated by the example Tambudzai gives:

> Knowing that he did not need help, that he oonly wanted to demonstrate to us and himself that he had the power, the authority to make us do things for him, I hated fetching my brother's luggage. (10)

This situation summarizes the conditions that triggered Tambudzai to realize her identity as a woman and the sexist structure of the patriarchal order. As seen, Nhamo enjoys the status that the patriarchal structure in Shona culture gives her. According to Tambudzai, Nhamo's uncaring,

marginalizing, exclusionary attitudes, reinforced by her male nature stemming from her culturally ingrained sexist understanding, are socially accepted because it is a reflection of male-dominated authority.

In *Nervous Conditions*, as seen in *The Joy of Motherhood*, boys have priority. The pain they suffer when they lose their sons is the best indication of this. For example, Tambudzai's mother refuses to be comforted by Maiguru because she accuses him to have "bewitched him now he is dead".(54) When the family had no money to pay for school fees, it was Tambudzai who had to drop out of school so that Nhamo could attend school. Tambudzai was very upset by this situation and made the following observation: "The needs and sensibilities of the Women in my family were not considered a priority, or even legitimate. That was why 1 was in Standard three in the year that Nhamo died, instead of in Standard Five, as I should have been by that age." (12) This highlights the conflicting positions of girls and boys in Shona society. A case in point is the fact that girls' education is never on men's minds, ignored or portrayed as 'illegal'. Nhoma tells Tambudzai that education is her right: "Babamukuru wants a clever person, somebody who deserves the chance. That's why he wants me.

He knows I've been doing very well at school. Who else is there for him to take?" (47-48) Through his due diligence on Tambudzai, Nhamo emphasizes that his sister Tambudzai, whom he believes to have a culturally less privileged position than him as a son, cannot have a special status like him because he has realized that in Shona culture, men are valued and prioritized over women.

After Nhamo died of convulsions, Babamukuru asked for someone to send to school and had to choose Tambudzai because there was no suitable candidate, that is, there were no other boys. Tambudzai describes the process of her selection by Babamukuru as follows:

> After a decent length of time had passed, Babamukuru again raised the question of the emancipation of my father's branch of her family. 'It is unfortunate', he said, 'that there is no male child to take his duty, to take this job of raising the family from hunger and need, Jeremiah. (56)

As seen, girls are so marginalized that they are often seen as so worthless that they cannot even be given a chance. Moreover, Babamukuru's perception is similar to the approach in *The Joy of Motherhood*. Babamukuru believes that women

will never be able to take economic responsibility or assume a leadership role.

Expected to live their lives according to the gender roles prescribed by the patriarchal Shona culture, the female characters in Tense Situations are disempowered by the cultural and social burdens they have to carry. Tambudzai's mother says the following about this situation: "This business of womanhood is a heavy burden, […] And these days it is worse, with the poverty of blackness on one side and the weight of womanhood on the other Aiwa! What will help you, my child, is to learn to carry your burdens with strength". (16) Therefore, Mainini advises women to submit to their hardships as if there is no other way. This situation points to the problems and marginalization of Mainini women on the basis of race, gender and class.

In her novel, Dangarembga effectively portrays the situation of both colonized men and women in colonial Zimbabwe. Although this chapter focuses on the conditions affecting women's lives, most characters in the novel face obstacles arising from racial, gender and economic-based oppression. Thus, while colonialism exploited and destroyed Africa's natural habitats, it had a particularly devastating

impact on black women due to their dependent status on the social ladder, especially economically deprived women like Mainini. Because of their dependency, black Shona women have been introduced to the 'tense situation' that Fanon refers to. The concept of 'black poverty' exemplified above by Tambudzai's mother, Mainini, refers to the economic deprivation experienced by black people as a result of colonialism, which colonized women experience more severely. Accordingly, the burden of womanhood also means 'self-compromise' and 'unremitting work' in fulfilling the role of a good wife and mother expected of women in the patriarchal Shona culture.

Patriarchal domination is a mechanism of control that varies across countries and cultures on the African continent. As can be seen, African men were weakened and in many ways disempowered by the colonial powers. In response, to compensate for their lost status, "they have become more cruel at home." (Loomba 142)

If we compare the patriarchal characters in *The Joys of Motherhood* and *Nervous Conditions* within the framework of Loomba's view, in *The Joys of Motherhood*, in Lagos, where the colonial order is dominant, Nnu Ego and Nnaife, the father

figure of his family, are called by his boss Dr. Meers and his wife Mrs. Meers, who represent the colonial order, with nicknames reflecting the typical other attributed to the East (baboon) and their labor is exploited. But in particular, the self-confidence that Nnu Ego has been given with her first son and the gender roles and patriarchal attitudes that the colonial ideology has diminished from her are felt more in the home. Compared to Nnaife, the father figure in *Nervous Conditions*, Babamukuru, represents a harsher and stricter patriarchal structure. Especially when he realizes that Nyasha and Tambudzai are defying him, he becomes even more authoritarian.

Babamukuru has considered increasing patriarchal pressure within the household because she has convinced herself that if she does not do so, her patriarchal position, already damaged by colonialism, will be further damaged. As a result, Babamukuru becomes enraged when he sees that Nyasha does not respect him, even though she should:

"Do not talk to me like that, child', warned babamukuru. 'You must respect me. I am your father. And in that capacity I am telling you, I- am-telling-you, that I do not like the way you are always walking about with these-er-these Young men. Today this one,

tomorrow that one. What's the matter with you, girl? Why can't you behave like a Young Woman from a decent home? What will people say when they see Sigauke's daughter carrying on like that?" (115-116)

Accordingly, Nyasha tries to break free from the control of both the colonizers and her father, but this does not seem possible as both forces, especially at home, are concentrated in her father. To a certain extent, Babamukuru's attitudes at home, which at times represent oppressive male and colonialism, are reminiscent of Nnaife's behavior in Emecheta's *The Joy of Motherhood*, but this is much more noticeable in Babamukuru because he is a representative of the traditional male-dominated lifestyle as well as adopting western-colonialist beliefs and attitudes.

As well known, in both Western and African societies, especially with colonialism, the patriarchal family structure is an important institution and social order in which children are not equal and are educated according to gender roles. Babamukuru's education has often made him a strong personality. Therefore, she is in an important position to control the patriarchal structure and ensure its spread into social life. The difference between Babamukuru and other men in

Shona culture is the privilege that Babamukuru has acquired through Western colonial education. Therefore, although he chose Tambudzai because there were no other boys in the family, he views education slightly differently from other men. It was this difference that gave Tambudzai the opportunity to get an education. Nevertheless, although Babamukuru cannot stop praising education, she often tells her family and friends that education helps women to be better prepared for their social duties. He therefore wishes that Tambudzai, through her education, "goes into her husband's home" as a good woman, aware of her social roles. (56)

Maiguru, Babamukuru's wife, also appears as a personality who is negatively affected by the patriarchal order and who has been put into gender roles. Although she has the same level of education as Babamukuru, because she is a woman, it does not seem possible for her to be considered socially equal to a man in a patriarchal system where Babamukuru is influential.

Accordingly, Maiguru does not make much effort to step out of the role assigned to her. Maiguru has internalized the gender role ascribed to her as a woman to such an extent that Tambudzai was surprised to hear that she had a

"master's degree." (102) As   seen, even though Maiguru has a good education, it is not easy for her to be equal to men as a result of her gender, class and race-based role. While Babamukuru receives all the praise, Maiguru is recognized only as a wife who is loyal to her husband and his decisions, going to England with him when necessary. In addition, although Maiguru provides most of the financial income needed to run the household, her efforts are ignored and "she could not use the money she earned for her own purposes and had been prevented by marriage from doing the things she wanted to do". (103)

As mentioned earlier, the characters in the novel, especially the women, need to overcome the 'tense situation' they are subjected to in order to realize themselves. If they cannot overcome this process, it will be difficult for them to realize themselves and achieve their goals, and thus their personal development will be fixed in a limited position. Many of the female characters in the novel have tried to escape from this oppressive system, but the methods and tactics employed by some of them have failed, leaving them in a self-destructive position. For example, Nyasha failed by going against the patriarchal order. Nyasha could not overcome her 'nervous conditions' because she lacked a basic 'sense of self' on which

to base her resistance. Nyasha could not realize herself because she could not overcome being caught between two cultures and could not find a balance. She failed in her efforts to prove herself because her mother was caught in what Maiguru describes as "loose connections" (109), contradictions, thoughts and attitudes that could not come together. Ultimately, her nervous breakdowns are an important indicator of her success and her downfall.

Maiguru has not been able to transcend the submissive, compliant wife and mother roles she is trapped in and realize herself because she does not have the courage, the 'womanist' attitude to step out of the traditional structure dominated by her husband. Rather than wanting to learn more, to go deeper, she seems content with what is given. In one part of the book, Maiguru tries to realize herself but fails because when she leaves home, she has to take refuge in the home of another man, her brother, and as a result, she has to return to the traditional domestic environment that Babamukuru offers her. Nyasha comments on this situation as follows: "It's such a waste', […] Imagine, what she might have been with the right kind of exposure!" (178) Although Maiguru's return home changed her a little more, she was unable to overcome her 'nervous condition' and

preferred being a 'good, faithful' wife to being a self-confident, self-actualized woman. Tambudzai's mother, Mainini, is trapped for different reasons. Mainini's nervous conditions' is one of poverty and she cannot overcome this economic and material deprivation.

Mainini also lacks the willpower to change her life and is exhausted by the burden of womanhood imposed on her by patriarchal, colonial, sexist culture. As a result, Mainini's character is subjected to "triple colonization" as a result of colonialism, sexist attitudes, and economic deprivation indirectly triggered by colonialism. In addition, she complains about obstacles such as the 'burden of womanhood' in relation to black poverty that prevent women from self-realization. As Berndt puts it: "For too long Mainini has resigned herself to her fate, doing nothing to change her position and silently suffering the conditions that degrade her." (92) Again, according to Berndt, Mainini's life, the structures in the social space in which she lived, did not offer her any other option than the condition she was in, and "her daily duties did not offer her enough opportunities for rest or philosophical reflection." (92) Mainini's despair of her own conditions played a major role in this situation. Tambudzai's stance in social life is

effectively presented in her description of a day working in the fields:

> My mother, lips pressed tight, would hitch little Rambanai more securely on her back and continue silently at her labours. The ferocious swings of her arms as she grabbed and stripped a maize stalk restrained Netsai and me from making the slightest murmur of rebellion. (7)

As the quote suggests, Mainini did not give herself the opportunity to reflect on her own situation. Even though she is one of the elders in Afrikana womanism that Hudson refers to as worthy of respect, her lack of effort to break the gender role and colonial oppression assigned to her shows her lack of a 'womanist' stance. Mainini is unaware that by continuing to behave in this way, her own 'oppression' and 'ineffectiveness' will perhaps be passed on to her daughter Netsai, because it is highly likely that Netsai, who will take her as a role model, will also be restricted and accept the roles that the patriarchal sexist structure deems appropriate for her.

Unlike Mainini, Maiguru and Nyasha, Lucia and Tambudzai are characters who do not resign themselves to their fate and do not lose hope in their quest for self-realization. While Lucia strives

to achieve what she wants, she is also able to adapt to the changes that occur around her. Lucia is a self-confident, eager character who is not repressed by the systems of the patriarchal structure in favor of change. Her fondness for freedom allows her not only to express her thoughts openly, but also her sexual desires. This is important because Lucia is not under the influence of patriarchal and colonialist pressures from outside, as she knows her identity as a woman, who she is, and as a 'womanist' she can or wants to experience her love, affection and desire. Lucia has the chance to reach a state of 'self-actualization' that Mainini and other female characters cannot reach. According to Berndt, her 'self-actualization' makes her powerful because "her courage comes from Zimbabwean geography and culture, and the relationship between culture and geography is embodied in her."(101) Therefore, Lucia has not only maintained connections to her roots in terms of culture, traditions and belonging, as Tambudzai did, but also has the strength and consciousness to act according to her physical needs.

In addition, Lucia manages to transcend the gender stereotypes of what women are expected to do towards their children and husbands. She refuses to be controlled by men, but she knows

how to use them when necessary: "A woman has to live with something, […] even if it's only a cockroach. And cockroaches are better. They are easy to chase away, isn't it?" (155) As seen, Lucia does not allow anyone to tell her what to do. If we analyze how strong Lucia's sense of self is, Lucia gives the impression that she respects Babamukuru's attitudes, which are a reflection of patriarchal-colonial ideology. But at the same time, she can challenge his authority in certain situations. For this reason, she persuades Babamukuru, who is known as a god figure by his family and community, to support her ideas and find a job that frees him from his dependence on the patriarchal structure. Realizing that Babamukuru wants to maintain his position as the leader of the family, Lucia does not question Babamukuru's authority whenever she needs his help and thus is able to achieve her goal. Lucia explains this situation as follows: "Babamukuru wanted to be asked, so I asked. And now we both have what we wanted, isn't it?" (162) In this way, Lucia decides to get an education in order to make herself stronger without feeling dependent on the patriarchal structure, and through this, she has the opportunity to become an independent woman who can carry herself forward in life, free from the

structure of poverty and the patriarchal-colonial order.

Along with Lucia, who seizes the opportunity to break free from the patriarchal structure by taking a position against it, Tambudzai stands out as a female character who survives in the novel and can be shown as an example of a new and free woman model in Shona culture and African culture. Tambudzai shows that the opportunity to get an education enabled her to escape from poverty and the social pressures that dominated her early life. Although at first it seemed impossible for Tambudzai, with Babamukuru's educational opportunity, Tambudzai made the most of it. At first, when Tambudzai first moves into Babamukuru's house, she appears compliant and submissive. But later, as she embraces her identity as a woman in the face of patriarchy, she begins to question Babamukuru's dominance of her space. With the realization of her identity as a woman, Tambudzai also sees that her culture is also important and must be protected against the colonial order. Therefore, the importance of the balance between the choices she wants to make and her culture has become part of her identity. Understandably, if Tambudzai had chosen to be different, it would have been by completely separating herself from her culture and

people. She could have turned into a misfit and in her 'nervous conditions' she would have had no support against marginalization and exploitation, she could have suffered a deep psychological blow. For example, in her 'nervous conditions' Nyasha, who has problems with her roots, who has no belonging, has no one to rely on except Tambudzai. As a result, Tambudzai understands the importance of her family and culture and is aware of the "Englishness" (207) that her mother often calls her. She realizes that if she is not careful, her essence will be destroyed, both her African and 'womanist' stance will be suppressed, and she will end up in Nyasha's situation: "I was not like Nyasha, who could forget where she was so entirely that she could do whatever she fancied and as a result usually did it well. I was aware of my surroundings." (112) In this regard, Tambudzai maintained a relationship with her roots and paid attention to what was going on in other environments.

Another reason why Tambudzai came out of the 'nervous conditions' stronger is her grandmother and her bond with her mother on many issues. Khani Begum comments on this as follows: "Strengthened by her maternal ties, Tambudzai recognizes herself in their struggles and triumphs."(27) Tambudzai finds her identity

mostly in her grandmother's stories, which make her aware of concepts such as 'racial oppression' and the 'effects' of 'colonialism'. Tambudzai also grew maize thanks to her grandmother, who taught her how to plant crops, and before Nhamo died, she sold it in the city market for a while to pay for school fees. Although Tambudzai initially questioned her mother's opposition to her continuing her education and did not understand her mother's assertion of the "burden of womanhood" that they had to carry, she says that when she attended The Sacred Heart Convent school and became more "conscious" and self-actualized, her mother "knew many things" and "respected her knowledge and opinion". (207) Although Mainini is against her daughter's education at The Sacred Heart Convent school, she follows a logical method in warning her daughter against the corrupting influence of the colonialist excluding, humiliating, marginalizing and sexist ideology, and she reveals the examples of Nyasha, Nhama and Chido (Nyasha's brother). Through both her mother's indoctrination and her own observations, Tambudzai identified the psychological and cultural complexities that characters like Babamukuru and Nyasha around her were subjected to, such as assimilation, mental instability (in the context of the inferior exploited,

indigenous context of the exploiter versus the inferior exploited, emphasized by Fanon). Her 'consciousness' and 'cultural commitment' to these issues enabled her to stand in solidarity with them as they grappled with their problems. bell hooks argues that in these and similar situations, women need to work together in opposition and to come to a common understanding and mutual aid. (The Margins, 63) As hooks has argued, it is only when women want something badly and are able to come to terms with 'womanist' perspectives in the universal context, and 'Afrikana womanhood' and 'African womanism' in the African context, that they are able to overcome the common obstacles that stand in their way and better reflect both the representation of their own female identities and the cultural background of their history.

Although Nyasha lost the battle against the patriarchal-colonial system, her rebellious, non-conformist attitudes to some extent influenced Tambudzai and made her open her eyes, take a stand, question and challenge the patriarchal-colonial-classist mentality that she had not fully realized. Ultimately, Tambudzai expresses her admiration for Nyasha's perceptive attitude, which developed his critical skills and opened his intellectual horizons. (90) Similarly, Nyasha has been a kind of catalyst for Tambudzai's

development. On the other hand, Nyasha has always found Tambudzai's help and friendship at his side. When Tambudzai left to study at The Sacred school, Nyasha had no one to "in bridging some of the gaps in her life." (200) The most important reason for her inability to form her identity is the gaps she could not fill in her life and her lack of a 'womanist' (African womanist) stance due to her lack of cultural belonging.

Unlike Nyasha, Tambudzai is connected to her roots, which reflect Shona culture, and this has led to the development of a 'sense of belonging'. Tambudzai's sense of belonging was also reinforced by her relationship with the countryside where she spent much of her childhood: "The river, trees, fruits and fields. This is how the story (everything) began. These were my first memories." (4)

Tambudzai's love and passion for the river near her home and her visits to the countryside have always kept her attachment to her people and her land alive. Tambudzai's journey of awareness, in contrast to her early years of education, reaches a higher level during and after her studies at The Sacred Heart. During this period, Tambudzai realizes that the education he has received has become even more obscure, and that he has

difficulty perceiving its meaning. Moreover, although Tambudzai had received his education for his own development, he clearly sees the dehumanization aspect of colonialism, especially in this school: "There were more evils than advantages to be reaped from such an opportunity […] The process, she said, was called assimilation."(181-182) Nyasha is already aware of this aspect of colonialism because she had an adventure in England that led to a 'lack of belonging' and she sets an example for Tambudzai with her own life.

As a result, Tambudzai recognizes this situation and continues her development through the education she receives in order to empower and realize herself as a woman, with her own female identity, without any shortage of cultural identity, in accordance with the important preamble of African and Afrikana womanism: 'to name herself, to represent herself' and "refuse to be brainwashed". (208) In the period close to the 1970s, when the colonial era was coming to a close and heralding Zimbabwe's future freedom, the character of Tambudzai gains both her female identity and her cultural identity, Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, which also points to a national literature and culture that is supposed to flourish on the basis of Fanon's views,

concludes with an attitude that gives us hope for the end of colonialism and the recovery of the dehumanized state of mind of the colonized subject. In the fourth part of the study, the character and story of Esi, the representative of the contemporary African Woman emphasizing the necessity of a modern female identity and, accordingly, the need for Africa to attain true freedom by opposing the patriarchal order in 1990s Ghana, which was dominated by 'neo-colonialism', considered as an indirect continuation of colonialism, is examined.

CHAPTER IV: *CHANGES: A LOVE STORY:* NEO-COLONIALISM AND WOMEN'S RESISTANCE: ESI

Love can be and is an important source of empowerment when we struggle to confront issues of sex, race, and class[16]

In the novel, *Changes: A Love Story*, Ama Ata Aidoo deals with concepts and issues such as 'women's harsh working conditions', 'the visibility of a single woman in an urban environment', 'education', 'the significant change in the status of contemporary women' and 'neo-colonialism'. Writer, poet, playwright and short story writer Ama Ata Aidoo, whose real name is Christina Ama Ata Aidoo, was born in Ghana in 1942. She is a first generation graduate of the University of Ghana in Legon. He began his literary career when he won a prize in a short story competition organized by the Mbari Club in Ibadan, an important cultural workshop in 1960s Nigeria. His published works include the plays *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1965) and *Anowa* (1969); the collection

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[16] bell hooks, "Feminism: A Transformational Politic". *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*, Toronto: Between the Lines, 1988. 26.

of short stories *No Sweetness Here* (1970); the novels *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977) and *Changes: A Love Story* (1991) and *Someone Talking to Sometime* (1985), a collection of poems. Ghanaian writer, playwright, poet, novelist and critic Ama Ata Aidoo, whose opposition to European imperialism and distance from neo-colonialism and African nationalism in Ghana is evident, is deeply committed to African culture and its center. (*In Their Own Voice* 27) At the same time, in his work and in many interviews, Aidoo emphasizes the fact that his primary concern is feminism or African-centered womanism.

Ata Aiodo's second novel, *Changes: A Love Stor*y (1991), also deals with the African woman's search for identity, similar to the author's plays (*The Dilemma of a Ghost*, 1965; *Anowa*, 1970), short stories (*Our Sister Killjoy*, 1977; *The Eagle and Chickens and Other Stories*, 1986) and poems (*Someone Talking to Sometime* 1986, *Birds and other Poems,* 1987).

Aidoo criticizes the forces that "wreak havoc on the mind of the contemporary African Woman: especially about herself" (Changes 75), and exposes the male-dominated hierarchy that has just seized power and forgotten women, while supposedly liberating the whole society. In her

introduction to Ayi Akwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Ama Ata Aidoo also refers to Fanon, who draws attention to the possible negative situation for African countries that will gain their freedom. In his important work *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon states: "When this caste system (colonialism) is abolished, when it is destroyed by its victorious contrasts, it will be seen that nothing new has happened since freedom was proclaimed and that everything has to start all over again from the beginning."(176) This is the situation in Armah's work to which Aidoo refers in *Changes: A Love Story*, to which Aidoo refers, is also evident in *Changes: A Love Story*. For example, in a conversation with the protagonist of the novel, Ali states that his father Musa Musa never kept his money 'in the white man's bank':

> My father keeps telling everyone openly that he will take his Money to the bank the day something changes properly. As far as he is concerned, these independences have proved to be nothing more than a trick! You should see him imitating African leaders when they are with the headsof Western governments or their representatives, as they tremble and grin with great effort to please! And Allah, he can do them all!Francophone, Anglophone, Lusophone, any kind. No, he is

convinced that nothing has changed, so he sleeps on his money." (26)

By revealing this situation, Aidoo states that there is no real freedom and in fact 'colonialism' has changed its form and reigns under the name of 'neo-colonialism'.

In addition to the disappointment caused by the lack of a truly free environment, Aidoo draws attention to the oppression and 'women's problem' that African women are subjected to as a result of the attitudes of the male-dominant understanding holding the artificial power in the ongoing neocolonial environment. When Ali's first wife, Fusena, informs him of her decision to marry for the second time (to Esi), the reactions of the other women in Ali's house to this attitude and the thoughts they express reveal once again that the false freedom that neo-colonialism[17] masks itself with does not change anything and that everything

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[17] Neo-colonialism was first coined by Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first president and an advocate of the unification of all Africans, in his Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism (1965). According to Nkruwah, although countries like Ghana have gained political independence, former colonial elements and emerging superpowers such as the United States have continued to play an important role indirectly in their cultures and economies. (Ashcroft, *The Key Concepts* 146-8)

is the same as before, and that the patriarchal and sexist understanding still disregards women's identity:

> The older Women felt bad. So an understanding that had never existed between them was now born. It was a man's world. You only survived if you knew how to live in it as a Woman. What shocked the older Women though, was obviously how little had changed for their daughters— school and all! (107)

Aidoo depicts the character of Fusena, who is Muslim, has a bachelor's degree and has succeeded in her business life with the timely support of her husband Ali, as a representation of contemporary female figures in the neo-colonial order who have not completely escaped patriarchal control and have not reached the peak of freedom, unable to intervene in decisions about her life while under such influence. Fusena, who accepts the traditional gender-based role assigned to her in the male world and, contrary to her education, compromises her contemporary female identity in order to keep her husband Ali, who wants to marry for the second time, tries to ensure her female identity and freedom by taking a position against the dominant gender male-dominant representations in an order dominated by

patriarchal, traditional male-dominant understanding, just like Adaku in *The Joy of Motherhood* and Lucia in *Nervous Conditions*. However, even though Fusena gains her economic freedom by taking a position against Ali's patriarchal situation and becomes the owner of one of the important shopping malls in Accra, she cannot be characterized as a character who 'seeks to be a subject' because she does not express her reaction and does not fully oppose the neo-colonialist patriarchal order, at least to the extent that Esi does, to the extent required by contemporary African female identity.

Unlike Fusena's character Esi, unlike Buchi Emecheta's Nnu Ego, Esi is a well-educated and self-determined character who plays a leading role in life-changing decisions. Esi represents the modern, Western-educated African woman from the generation after Nnu Ego. Esi in Aidoo's work is depicted as an educated, career-oriented and single African woman. Aidoo reflects Esi's tension with society and the accusation of "acting like a man" ("To be a Woman" 261).

Esi is an ambitious, successful civil servant working in the City Statistics Department, and when she leaves her first husband Oko in an eventful way and falls in love with Ali, the process of change, as the title of the book suggests, begins

irrevocably. At the beginning of the novel, Esi lives in Accra, the capital of Ghana, with his first wife Oko and their daughter Ogyaanowa. From the beginning of the novel, it is clear that Oko and Esi are not happy in their marriage. Esi feels that Oko demands much more time from her than should be expected of a contemporary African woman trying to become a subject. Oko, on the other hand, as a successful teacher, soon to be the principal of the school where she works, is not satisfied with one child and would like to have at least one more child, preferably a boy. However, she feels that Esi " definitely puts her career well above any duties she owed as a wife. She was a great cook, who complained endlessly any time she hadto enter the kitchen." (8) Oko is fed up with Esi's work life because she leaves early in the morning and comes home late in the evening with work, they have had to hire a maid for housework, and she also attends countless meetings all over the world.

Although Oko is educated, she was raised in and represents the indigenous, patriarchal culture: "If she had not been reluctant [...] her aunts could have found her a more suitable wife [...] properly brought up, not pampered, not eager for her own money and further education..." (39). As it can be understood, the fact that Esi had a good level of education and had achieved economic

independence offended the aunts who were raised with the attitudes of a generation ago and Oko who was under their influence. In contrast to the aunts, who commented from the perspective of traditional marriage and influenced Oko, mobilizing her traditional, patriarchal instincts and causing the incident of 'marital rape', Aidoo, in her article "To Be a Woman", shares the words of her own aunt who emphasized the importance of education for a modern African woman as follows: "My child, go as far as you can along the path of education, until you feel tired. As for marriage, it is something a woman can choose along the way."(239) As understood from the quote above, Aidoo shows that education is an important phenomenon for the contemporary African woman to make her own decision and chart her own path in terms of 'class', 'economic', 'racial' and 'gender'. In this respect, the character of Esi shows resistance as a strong and modern woman character against this order in a patriarchal-new colonialist society that has not yet been fully liberated.

Oko refuses to allow his aunts to find him a more suitable wife than the traditional Esi. According to him, Oko is madly in love with Esi, but he has "rather inferior and chauvinistic social attitudes" (Odamtten 163). As if to prove his

masculinity, Oko takes out his anger on Esi by sexually assaulting her because he cannot attract her to the male-dominated system he dominates:

'My friends are laughing at me,' he said.

Silence.

'They think I'm not behaving like a man.'

Esi was trying to pretend she hadn't heard the declaration [...] Oko flung the bedcloth away from him, sat up, pulled her down, and moved on her. Esi started to protest. But he went on doing what he had determined to do all morning. He squeezed her breast repeatedly, thrust his tongue into her mouth, forced her unwilling legs apart, entered her, plunging in and out of her, thrashing to the lesft, to the right, pounding and just pounding away. Then it was all over. Breathing like a marathon runner at the end of a particularly gruelling race, he got off her, and fell heavily back on his side of the bed. He tried to draw the bedcloth to cover both of them again. For some time, neither of them spoke. There was nothing else he wanted to say, and there was nothing she could say, at least, not for a while. (8-9)

This event is an important trauma that leads Esi to end her marriage. For someone like Esi, who

has a high level of consciousness, both in terms of class and female identity, and who wants to have a say over her own body, the step she must take in the face of this act is to throw off the yoke of Oko, who is a slave to neocolonial, patriarchal desires. But in such a society, this decision will not be easy to put into practice, and Esi is already aware of this: "Marital rape? No. The society could not possible have an indigenous word or phrase for it. Sex is something that the husband demands from his wife, as his right. Any time. And at his convenience."(12) In this case, Aidoo is saying that the concept of 'marital rape' has no place in the local patriarchal culture, that is, no one would take seriously a woman who says 'my husband raped me' because it is considered a part of sexuality that is the husband's right, whether she wants it or not. Oko's typical patriarchal attitude, treating Esi as an object ready to be exploited, also seeks to lock her into traditional molds, making her subordinate and unable to speak out. The patriarchal attitudes that cause women to be relegated to the second sex, to the status of objects, such as confining women to traditional patterns, passivizing them, sexually emasculating them, reducing them to a mere reproductive being and confining them to the home. Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*, Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* and

Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch*, are reflected in the specific case of Oko, the representative of neo-colonialism. By fictionalizing Esi as a woman who wants to leave due to 'marital rape', Aidoo aims to destroy the common attitudes of African men who think that they can exploit their wives and their bodies unlimitedly if they marry and emphasizes that women should have a say over their own bodies.

Oko, who tries to suppress Esi as a man with his chauvinistic and sensual feelings, has not been successful in his relationship with Esi as a wife. Because Oko, who actually tried to put Esi into traditional molds in the background of her ego, demanded Esi to change her work life that complemented her identity as a woman, thinking that she was keeping her away from herself and preventing her from fully reflecting her patriarchal influence, even though it was Esi's "freedom" that affected her the most at the beginning of their relationship, on the other hand, Opokuya, Esi's most intimate friend and one of the important female figures reflecting the female identity and situation of the period together with Esi and Fusena, summarizes the situation as follows:

> Men are not really interested in a woman's independence or her intelligence. The few who claim they like intelligent and active

women are also interested in having such Women permanently in their beds and in their kitchens. (45)

As it is clear from Opokuya's views, Oko, due to her education and professional status, should have supported women's independence and standing on their own feet, but she was influenced by her aunts who described Esi, who did not want a second child, as a "semi-barren witch" and her colleagues and friends with dominant male-dominant attitudes who led her astray, and thus it is possible to understand that she did not have the character and internalized education to be able to handle a career woman like Esi, as he "fought with her woman's carrer for her attention" (70).

When the trace of 'rape' in the novel is analyzed in detail, Oko's forcible possession of Esi's body allows for a reference to the problematic and shocking history of the African geography. The intervention of the European ideology, which was molded by the Enlightenment and Victorian understanding, culminated in the colonization of the African continent and the people of the region were systematically subjugated. A. Adu Bohen, in his *Topics in West African History*, reflects the views of a local tribal chief on this situation as follows: "The forcible appropriation of our land has given way to the forcible occupation of our

people."(110) In the name of colonization and civilization, expansionist European nations have both literally and figuratively raped Africa. However, after the achievement of the so-called liberation, the heirs of the colonial order, the neocolonialist representations of neocolonialism, continued the process of rape of the region.

The description of the African woman as 'symbol of the earth, symbol of the nation', 'Mother Africa' is quite common in African literature and postcolonial literature. According to Nfah-Abbenyi:

> This idealization of the African woman, which is often repeated in African literature and which makes her a symbol of love, is paralleled by the sublimity of 'motherhood', 'productivity and fertility'. (5)

In this regard, in African and postcolonial male-dominated literature, female characters are often portrayed as characters who "live and fulfill the fate and roles assigned to them, without a voice, maintaining the position of the subaltern" (5). In contrast to male-dominated texts, *Changes: A Love Story*, Ama Ata Aidoo shows an African-based feminist reaction to the women's issue and identity, contrary to the traditional approach, through the character of Esi, who does not keep silent and opposes oppression and the

understanding that tries to reduce women to the image of fertility by silencing them. However, Ata Aidoo sees love as a political issue and in *Changes: A Love Story* is in fact a shadow text that allows her to discuss concepts such as the women's question, the acquisition of identity by contemporary African women, and the construction of a truly free nation after the neo-colonialism has been set aside. Aidoo touches upon the points she really wants to understand and emphasize through Esi's approaches in the love story in question.

Through the trope of 'marital rape' in the novel, Aidoo aims to erase the traditional roles and oppressions that continue to be imposed on women in the post-liberation period. Aidoo summarizes the process of colonization of women in the post-liberation period as follows:

> The colonizers crammed their language down our throats. They did not come to understand us and they certainly had very negative consequences and effects on contemporary African women. Our double struggle has continued. Not only as Africans, but also as women, we are exploited first by the colonizers and then by our own men who took power in their hands. (cited in Nfah-Abbenyi, *Emerging Perspectives* 282)

However, Ata Aidoo underlines that women's struggle against double colonization continues, and in the post-colonial, neo-colonial period, again in the continuing shadow atmosphere of colonialism, the patriarchal African man, who has taken power, attempts to subjugate the contemporary African woman in search of identity, and the resistance of the contemporary African woman in response.

Aidoo's social and political stance is reflected *in Changes: A Love Story* is reflected in the characteristics and depiction of Esi. In addition to Esi, the lives reflected through characters such as Fusena and Opokuya show that Aidoo "also shows how women's liberation is a necessary issue for the liberation of Africa" (Ada Uzoamaka Azodo 441). The feminism and African womanist stance of Aidoo, who stands out with her criticism of Ghanaian colonialist, patriarchal culture and politics, expresses through the character of Esi the portrayal of a postcolonial woman like Esi who is in search of a female identity in a neocolonial society. According to Aidoo, the liberation of everyone on the African continent lies in challenging gender and class oppression, imperialism and exploitation. ("African Women Today" 325).

Aidoo also criticized the attitudes of publishers and other influential elements in the publishing industry, and in particular condemned the indifference and exclusionary practices of both African and non-African critics (mostly male critics) towards African women writers. According to Aidoo, even in the rare criticism of African women writers, the overall aim is to debunk women's literature because criticism of women's work is more often "empty-headed, ridiculous and offensive". (165)

As an African feminist, Aidoo makes space in her work for the discussion of such African-based issues. Whereas Western feminism focuses more on women struggling in the face of obstacles, Aidoo presents more concretely the reality of the factors that limit contemporary African women in their daily lives. Among the constraints that frustrate women is the expectation that they conform to traditional roles (to be a good wife and mother first, to work only to support the family, if needed). In the traditional division of labor, most of the household chores are left to women, which imposes a significant time constraint on working women. Optimistically portrayed as 'right', 'husband beating' and 'domestic violence' are seen as rights for the husband and punishment for the woman who does not do her duty. In today's

African society, many women work because one salary is not enough to support the household. While women's work is important for the well-being of families, very few women are allowed to work, and most of them are in the service sector. Career planning rather than creating a second source of income is not taken for granted, especially if it is not in a female-related field.

In her article "To Be a Woman", Adioo lists some of the exclusionary experiences she encountered as an academic in Ghana, noting the importance of drawing attention to the difficulties African women face both in social and professional life, and the position of the African woman as a slave to cultural and sexual politics by marginalizing her and making her passive. For example, in a discussion on a national issue, a professor colleague advised her to engage in the act of 'writing' rather than speaking on public issues. She remembers this as rudeness and hostility (262). As a writer, she was also excluded by the head of the department as her *Our Sister Killjoy* was deemed more appropriate for the women's studies program than as a work about postcolonial Ghana. Aidoo, on the other hand, harshly criticizes the male-dominated, marginalizing attitude towards her by stating that "if Our Sister Killjoy or a similar work were

written by a man, no one would bat an eyelid because of the intense interest in this book" (262).

Although her status as a woman university lecturer and writer is considered unusual, Ama Ata Aidoo advises all African women to take an active role in life in order to create and improve their own conditions: "Because you are not alone. There are many women out there struggling with different levels of consciousness, coming from various economic and social backgrounds" (264). For the moment, it must be recognized that there is no abstract concept of "universal feminism" that claims to unite all women across national, racial, ethnic, socioeconomic and other boundaries. Within each of these local feminists there are varying degrees of movement, from questioning gender inequality for the first time to activism and theorizing. These gradations or 'levels of consciousness', as Aidoo puts it, not only prevent the vicious circle in society by making feminism a continuous movement, but also address the different needs of individual women within the same group: *Changes: A Love Story* does not seem to attempt to represent all the women of West Africa, nor all the working women of Accra. Its main characters are, as we have seen, middle class. Yet she avoids uniformity in projecting her characters in a stratum such as: secular, widowed,

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professional; wife/mother/nurse/midwife/mother who is at the same time secular and contemporary Muslim, veiled, well-managed in her professional life, and in a milieu of characters who take a hard line on polygamy.

In reality, *Changes: A Love Story* focuses on the struggle of the contemporary African woman for identity and agency in the face of the neo-colonial, patriarchal order through the friendship of two working Ghanaian women, Esi and Opokuya, rather than their relationship with men and their 'love story'. Although the development of the third woman, Ali's first wife Fusena, remains in the background compared to Esi and Opokuya, she is important for Aidoo's discussion of women's lives from different perspectives. The troubled inner landscapes of these protagonists are important for the evaluation and understanding of the text, which seems to summarize the love story rather than the social and psychological turmoil of women. Aidoo, who uses the love story to reflect her national and anti-colonialist political stance, insists that the liberation of the African continent can be achieved on the basis of an African womanist approach by African women working hand in hand with African men through African-centered, womanist attitudes, as if reminding bell hooks' 'feminism is for everyone'.

CONCLUSION

In this study, the literary works of Buchi Emecheta, Tsitsi Dangarembga and Ama Ata Aidoo reveal the gender roles of African women, the oppression they face in their societies and the impact of the colonial era on them. The works of the African women writers, in this study, deal with African-centered issues and approach contemporary women's issues from a womanist, postcolonial feminist perspective. *In The Joys of Motherhood*, Buchi Emecheta dramatically emphasizes the social roles and experiences of Igbo women on equal terms. Since she is also influenced by the local oral culture, Emecheta reflects her attitude towards the African local culture (Igbo) and colonialism and patriarchy through her characters.

As in Buchi Emecheta's other works, two different worlds, African and Western-colonial, are brought together to underline the fact that in the patriarchal, sexist order created by these two traditions, the African woman herself has never been recognized as a free individual who has gained her identity as a woman. Within the framework of her literary concern, Emecheta aims

to express the ordinary, ongoing situations of daily life and paints a portrait of the colonized Third World woman, with a special focus on the problems of African women. According to her, there is a contrast and contradiction between the local culture (Igbo) and the outside world and colonial culture, and since this contrast (colonialism) has not yet been resolved, this situation continues to affect African life, especially the living conditions and literary life of African women. Buchi Emecheta addresses the traditional roles expected of African women and reflects the social situation of African women subjected to double colonization.

Similar and even more varied situations are also addressed in the works of Ama Ata Aidoo and Tsitsi Dangarembga. In *Nervous Conditions*, Tsitsi Dangarembga reveals the world of perception and gender roles of South African, Zimbabwean women in the light of the contrasts and complexities created by patriarchy and colonialism. The struggle of the woman in this novel to maintain her identity as a woman against the patriarchal and colonialist dominant structure is also analyzed in this thesis in works such as *Joys of Motherhood*, *Changes: A Love Story*, which are also analyzed in this study. The author reflects such problems of women and identity through the

eyes of a developing young woman. *Nervous Conditions* serves the reality more effectively through a combination of language and narrative that is artistic, aesthetic and able to express the local Shona culture more concretely. In this work, this aesthetic structure better depicts the traditions and values of African cultures and people. In this context, Dangarembga reflects the patriarchal order triggered by colonialism and the women's issue as a factor that exists and primarily affects it, on a basis in which local customs and traditions are also highly visible. Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes: A Love Story* highlights the African women's freedom, which was very much felt in Ghana in the pre-colonial period, must be restored and that this is necessary for the liberation of the African continent, focuses on the search for women's identity by focusing on women-centered problems in the African woman, and on the formation of women's identity in the neo-colonial plane. Ama Ata Aidoo's female characters are revolutionary and reflect their radical attitudes in society. For example, the main character of the work, Esi, is presented to us as a new contemporary African woman who thinks and lives according to her own vision of life and in return, if necessary, confronts society.

Aidoo's female characters (Esi in particular) have something to say, have power, especially in today's society, but change in society is still more acceptable for men, whereas in the case of women, they are not so accepted. Aidoo suggests that the African woman should not sit in a corner and be silent, as expected, but should speak out in order to be on the same footing as the man. Although *Changes: A Love Story*, Aidoo suggests that African women should be more sensitive and have a say in shaping situations that shape the roles of society. Whereas Buchi Emecheta reflects on Nigeria's local culture and its contrasts, Aidoo portrays on Ghana's social structure, local culture, habits inherited from both this local culture and colonialism, and the problems that women have experienced and are experiencing.

The authors of all three books demonstrate how African feminism differs from Western feminism. As can be seen, African feminism reflects the diversity of cultures and traditions of the African continent quite effectively. It can be better seen that it is not monolithic and one-dimensional, as portrayed in Western discourse. As can be seen from the examples of Ghana, Nigeria and Zimbabwe, even though they are located in the same continent, each country and region has its own local beliefs and traditions, and

through postcolonial women's literature, African women writers like Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Wole Soyinka and other prominent African male writers have written their own stories by subverting the stereotypical images created by the tradition of colonial discourse and 'writing in reverse', by developing their own discourse against their own culture. Beginning with the analysis of the novels discussed in this study, the forgotten and silenced status of the African woman by the Western (male/female dominated) tradition and the African Third World male-centered tradition is underlined. Then, the hidden history of the subalternized woman, the double colonization process they experienced, and the freer environment that the pre-colonial African woman achieved compared to the colonial order and the local cultures (Igbo, Shona, Akan) that enabled her to do so were foregrounded.

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