

**FEMALE MASCULINITY IN SELECTED SHAKESPEAREAN  
AND NIGERIAN PLAYS**

**BY**

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## **CERTIFICATION**

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## DEDICATION

This PhD thesis, which is made possible through the inspiration of God almighty, is dedicated to **all fathers** who believe and labour for the highest education of the girl-child. This is especially dedicated to my father, Chief Julius, O. Ajonibode, who gave me the courage most fathers of yesteryears never cherished and for having an implicit trust of her darling daughter.

This is also dedicated to **all husbands** that support their wives in the course of educational pursuits, particularly the PhD. studies; and husbands who believe in women as the pillars of good homes and foundation of a better nation. This is moreover dedicated to my husband, Rev. Adewale Olanrewaju... for being my pillar of strength and faith during the programme.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Pages
Title Page	i
Certification	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	vi
Abstract	x
<b>CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION</b>	
1.1 Background to the study	1
1.2 Objectives to the study	3
1.3 Statement of the problem	4
1.4 Research questions	5
1.5 Purpose of the study	5
1.6 Significance of the study	6
1.7 Scope and Delimitation of the study	7
1.8 Research methodology	8
1.9 Justification	8
1.10 Definition of terms	10
<b>CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE</b>	
2.0 Introduction	15
2.1 Theoretical framework	15
2.1.1 Feminism	15
2.1.2 Feminist Theory	17
2.1.3 Derrida's Theory of Deconstruction	18
2.1.4 Nussbaum's Liberal/ Equality feminist theory	22
2.1.5 Liberal/Equality Feminist Theory	25
2.2 The Essence of English Renaissance drama to the Development of Nigerian Contemporary Literary Writings	28
2.3 The Development of Drama from the English Renaissance through the Contemporary Ages	29
2.4 Shakespeare and the English Renaissance Drama	30

2.4.1	The gender concepts: masculine and feminine ideologies	33
2.5	Development of Feminism, Feminists and Gender Theories	39
2.6	Masculinity and Femininity	46
2.6.1	Perception of masculinity in Shakespearean era, the Renaissance Age	52
2.6.2	Concepts of masculinity in the contemporary society	54
2.6.3	Female Masculinity	57
2.7	Forms and features of Female Masculinity	64
2.8	Types of female masculinity clues exhibited	65
2.8.1	Dress code clues	66
2.8.1.1	Purposes for cross-dressing	67
2.8.2	Voiced Act clues	68
2.8.3	Assertiveness clues	69
2.8.4	Body language clues	71
2.9	Instances of female masculinity and governance in the indigenous Nigerian Society	72
2.9.1	Female masculinity in economic and agricultural ventures in modern times in Nigeria	76
2.9.2	Female masculinity in the business industry and the media	77
2.10	Significance of Comparative Analysis to the Study	78
<b>CHAPTER THREE: THE GENESIS OF ENGLISH RENAISSANCE AND CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN WRITERS AND THEIR WRITINGS</b>		
3.0	Introduction	82
3.1	The genesis of gendered literary drama in the Renaissance	82
3.2	The English drama in the Renaissance and the portrayal of women	84
3.3	Writers of the Renaissance drama	88
3.3.1	Shakespeare – his ideology	90
3.4	A brief perspective on the Nigerian contemporary dramatic literature and their playwrights	91
3.5	Nigerian Drama and the Playwrights’ perception of Female characters	95

## CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF FEMALE MASCULINITY VARIABLES IN WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S SELECTED TEXTS

4.0	Introduction	98
4.1	Dress Code as clues to displaying Female Masculinity (crossdressing, disguise, transgenderism and transvestism in <i>Merchant of Venice, Twelfth Night</i> and <i>Macbeth</i> )	99
4.1.1	Merchant of Venice	99
4.2	Dress code: transvestism and disguise in: <i>Twelfth Night (TN)</i>	101
4.3	The voiced act as clue to displaying female masculinity (soliloquies, aside, conversational strategy, mannerism, flattery, persuasion, and prophecy) in: <i>RJ, MV, MT</i> and <i>TN</i>	105
4.3.1	Voiced act clue in: <i>RJ</i>	105
4.3.2	The voiced act clue in: <i>(TN)</i>	110
4.3.3	The voiced act clue in: <i>MAC</i>	110
4.4	Assertiveness as clue to displaying female masculinity (persistence, Dominance, control and coercion) in: <i>MV, MAC, TN,</i> <i>MT, RED</i> and <i>RJ</i>	112
4.4.1	Assertiveness clue in <i>MV</i>	113
4.4.2	Assertiveness clue in <i>RJ</i>	118
4.4.3	Assertiveness clue in <i>MAC</i>	119
4.4.4	Assertiveness clue of coercion, persuasion, control and Domination in <i>MAC</i>	120
4.5	Body language as clue to displaying female masculinity (flirtatious and glamorous outlook, gestures and bodily posture) in <i>MV</i> and <i>RJ</i>	125
4.5.1	Introduction	125
4.5.2	Body language clue in <i>MV</i>	126
4.5.3	Body language clue in <i>RJ</i>	129
4.5.4	Shakespeare's perception of women	133

## CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS OF ZULU SOFOLA'S SELECTED TEXTS

5.0	Introduction	136
5.1	Osofisan Femi – his artistic vision and ideology	136



5.2	Dramatic works of Femi Osofisan	138
5.3	Dresscodwe clue: (disguise/impersonation) in <i>Morountodun</i> (MT)	140
5.3.1	Assertiveness Clues in Red	142
5.3.2	Body language clue in (MT): use of beauty, courage and determination	146
5.4	Nigerian female writers and their perceptions of female character	148
5.5	Zulu Sofola: her biography	151
5.5.1	Her works	152
5.5.2	Justification for choosing Zulu Sofola	157
5.5.3	Assertiveness clue in: <i>Wedlock of the Gods</i> (WED)	161
5.5.4	Assertiveness as clue to displaying female masculinity (persistence, control and coercion) in: <i>The Showers</i> (SHO)	165
5.5.5	Assertiveness clue in the <i>Showers</i> (SHO)	166
5.5.6	Voiced act as clue to displaying female masculinity (persuasion and loud voice) in: <i>The Showers</i>	168
5.5.7	Deconstructing female writings: Sofola	170
<b>CHAPTER SIX: FINDINGS, SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS</b>		
<b>(FOR FURTHER STUDIES)</b>		
6.0	Introduction	172
6.1	Findings	172
6.2	Summary	178
6.3	Suggestions for future study	180
6.7	References	181

## ABSTRACT

Female masculinity is an expression of male gender traits in females. These masculine traits in female characters have received little attention from scholars of Western and Nigerian literary writings when compared to their focus on the socio cultural constructs of females as weak, soft and inferior. This study, therefore, examined different ways by which some female protagonists in selected Shakespearean and Nigerian plays express related masculine attributes with a view to determining the existence of masculinity features in the plays.

The study adopted Derrida's Deconstruction and Nussbaum's model of Liberal Feminist theories. Eight drama texts were purposively selected based on their thematic affinities for revolutionary attributes in females. These include Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice (MV)*, *The Twelfth Night (TN)*, *Macbeth (MAC)*, and *Romeo and Juliet (RJ)*; Osofisan's *Morountodun and Other Plays (MT)*, *Red is freedom Road (RED)*, and Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods (WED)* and *The Showers (SHO)*. Data were subjected to literary analysis.

Females in Shakespearean and Nigerian drama engage in diverse forms of era-bound masculinity clues to control people and situations. These clues include dress code, voice act, assertiveness and body language. In dress code (transvestism), Viola (*TN*) and Portia (*MV*) remain in disguised position, an exclusively male attribute in the Shakespearean period, to win in the law court and to subvert the society's ethics of women's voicelessness; Titubi (*MT*) engage in a psychological warfare-fashioned disguise to suppress warlords in their aggressive states. Voice act (mannerisms, soliloquies, prophecies, persuasions) are subtly, but effectively used by all the protagonists. Juliet (*RJ*) and Viola (*TN*) use mannerisms and soliloquies with infectious love to exert forces that trap their lovers; Portia (*MV*), Ibidun (*RED*), Obinna (*SHO*) and Ogwoma (*WED*) use persuasions with doggedness to subvert their men; Lady Macbeth and the witches (*MAC*) use prophecies to subdue Macbeth. Assertiveness (persistence, coercion, control) cut across the texts. Portia (*MV*) and Juliet (*RJ*) use persistence to dismiss the potential suitors dictated by the society; Viola (*TN*) and Lady Macbeth (*MAC*) use coercion to assert wills on their men; Titubi (*MT*), Ibidun (*RED*), Obinna (*SHO*) and Ogwoma (*WED*) use persistence and revolutionary qualities to transform the lives of their people. Body language is displayed by all protagonists, except Ogwoma (*WED*), Portia (*MV*), Viola (*TN*) and Juliet (*RJ*) who use aesthetic outlooks to entrap their suitors to succumb to their wills. Titubi's (*MT*) use of beauty, courage and determination quell the militant peasants, making the riotous society peaceful. Portia, Viola, Juliet and Lady Macbeth exhibit isolated, individualistic clues while Titubi, Ibidun, Ogwoma and Obinna exhibit masculinities through alliance of assertiveness in the spirit of unionism.

Females in Shakespearean plays display all the masculine attributes of dress code, voice act, assertiveness and body language clues, while those in Nigerian drama engage largely in assertive tendency clues. These largely semiotic features establish the era-bound differential exhibition of female masculinity in the dramatic works of Shakespeare, Sofola and Osofisan.

**Key words:** Female masculinity, Shakespearean plays, Nigerian plays, Literature and gender, Masculinity clues.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the study

The last couple of decades have prominently featured matters concerning women, feminists, feminism, women studies and gender issues worldwide. The general assumptions in Western culture and in post-independence African societies have been hinged on the fact that women are perceived, regarded and treated as inferior, weaklings and powerless when social and cultural issues relating to the society are raised. Women believe that they are sidetracked and severed from other social structures of life, such as culture, politics, marriage and administration. This notion stemmed from the fact that masculinity, one of the operative concepts in gender studies, has become the paradigm for measuring social ideals and qualities relating to being superior, bold, strong, assertive, reasonable and brilliant. These are some of the attributes ascribed to being 'masculine' and attributable to 'men'. However, the opposite and negative variables, such as weak, inferior, soft and unreasonable, are mistakenly accorded women such that they are regarded as being 'feminine' and female'.

Scholars of Western and Nigerian literatures like Galford (1988), Dorkin (1989) and Chinweizu (1990:9) have addressed this, claiming that "women are slaves and men are masters" and "all housewives are being economically exploited; all working women are oppressed". Primmer (1994:2) reiterates that feminist literary critics believe that women have been treated and perceived as men's inferiors for a long time, focusing on the socio-cultural constructs of females as weak, soft, inferior and voiceless. They also affirm that as time evolved, there have been lots of changes as women are not better or worse human beings than men. They are not less in tune with nature or their bodies, subtly, no more violent, not more nor less intelligent Primmer (1994:2). If and where there are differences, such are apparent, and are only products of cultural and social conditioning of the society, which lead to the division of human traits into femininity and masculinity that invariably complicate human relationships. This further buttresses the submission of Primmer that the re-emergence of feminist literary critics and theorists creates new interpretations of works, which have vital part to play in changing how and what one thinks about real women

through a greater understanding of them in literature. For instance, many female scholars have fought this description of women as inferior to men and as effeminate. Velar (1988) posits that women have equal and powerful status in the society, which is in agreement with Ogundipe's (2007:23) position that,

The definition of womanhood is not always biological or sexual and that there are socio-economic points and levels where women cease to be seen as women, but are officially and spiritually designated as men. The use of the woman to mean exclusively the feminine or the female would be problematic since womanhood sometimes crosses physical and gender borders. Womanhood therefore cuts across roles usually ascribed to the male body and does not indicate that the woman is female.

Sotunsa (2008:5) echoes the unequal values and effective attitudes of women in contemporary Nigerian society. Women see themselves as equally strong, capable, intelligent and successful ethical human beings. The foregoing is further affirmed by Penn (1998:2) who confirms the existence of powerful women who have the same status as patriarchs. They are described as matriarchs who wield political power and authority in any given society. In other words, there are situations where women exercise authorities that are quite binding on their subjects as men do. These facts erase any doubt as to whether female masculinity and its exercise by women, which Halberstam (1998:45) describes as the history of a male identified women in power is in existence. The fact that women have power and wield it did not start overnight. It has been a journey made and confirmed all along the ages. Akorede lends credence to this when she states that 'the precolonial, from the classical to the contemporary ages, the diverse attitudes of females either as submissive, subservient or otherwise remain significant and should require an exploratory attention' (Eyeh, 2011:10). This is because, for each of the ages, various reasons have dictated the sundry attitudes to women in the society. Whether they have been seen to be weak or strong, powerful or powerless, active or inactive, most dispositions to women have been patriarchal, while women's have been diversified according to cultural or political dictates peculiar to different era.

In the classical age, women were excluded from public life because they were seen as either subordinates or inferior to and, hence, were ruled by men. Even in the primitive era, male dominance was pre-eminent and women were generally at a disadvantage compared to man in everything contained to man as they were believed to be naturally weak and inferior. The subsequent era, which was the medieval, witnessed harsh discriminations against women. Although male authority was almost total, women were taken to be of lower status and created to help only in procreation. However, from the fifteenth century, which was the renaissance age, an age that ushered in Shakespeare and Shakespearean plays, there was the rebirth of civilisation and intellectual artistic development. Women began to assert their rightful status. This was when women began to exhibit strong traits to save themselves from the predicament in which they found themselves. It was during this era that writers began to appreciate militant roles inherent in women and their writings started to show stronger female characteristics that held dominant positions as either perpetuating family lines or helping their husbands to succeed in comfortable positions.

The Western world ushered in women education, and other movements and theories that engendered the total transformation of the society's perception of women and their talents. The re-emergence of these theories and related ideologies such as feminism, motherism, and lesbianism paved way for the recognition of the powerful status of women which had, in the past, been swept under the carpet.

## 1.2 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are, among others, to:

- i. Examine diverse ways by which female protagonists in selected Shakespearean and Nigerian plays express related masculine attributes in determining the existence of masculinity features in them.
- ii. Do a brief historical survey of the concepts of gender masculinity/femininity ideologies as reflected in the Western (English Renaissance and contemporary Nigerian) literary writings.

- iii. Establish the existence and practice of differential modes and means of female masculinity traits exhibited by the female protagonists in selected Shakespearean and Nigerian plays.
- iv. Contribute to the efforts to search for the ideal ways of adding a newer definition to gender ideology, thereby defining and redefining the concepts of masculinities and femininities as cross-gendered variables found in both genders, sex differentiations notwithstanding.

### 1.3 Statement of the problem

Much has been said in favour of the fact that women are weak, inferior and would not even hurt a fly. Some critics even hold that, in as much as all human beings are created equal by the same 'being', definitely, they share same traits, since the same blood and veins run through them. They begin to see that women are not better or worse human beings than men, and that any perceived differences are merely products of cultural and social conditioning of the society.

Traub (2001:129) submits that the issue of gender and sexuality depends on culture and could be historically determined. This amplifies the idea that neither gender nor sexuality can be contemplated separately from the human body, because the body provides the basis for assumptions of attributes considered appropriate to being masculine or feminine. Similarly, Halberstam (1998:44) comes up with the concept of female masculinity, which she calls the experiences of the lesbians, gays, bi-sexual and transgenderists. She argues that these manifestations underline, the different ways by which women exercise the maleness in them without going through surgical intervention.

However, masculine traits in female characters have received little attention from scholars of Western and Nigerian literary writings when compared to their focus on the socio-cultural constructs of women as highlighted above. Therefore, there is need to properly investigate this issue in the light of the difference in opinions shared by different scholars above. It is historical that there are powerful women in the societies in question whose traits correspond in status to men's and who equally wield some forms of masculine power and authority within their societies. As such, the study reiterates the fact that women do exercise the masculinity inherent in them without necessarily going through the above means but through subtle means and in their female-bodied characters.

#### 1.4 Research questions

The study intends to provide answers to the following questions:

1. Do women exhibit masculine attributes similar to or different from the men?
2. What are the indicators that dress code expresses female masculinity in the physical turn out of the protagonists in the texts?
3. What are the testing agents that voice-act expresses related masculine traits in the utterances of the selected female protagonists?
4. What are the different modes and means by which female protagonists in selected Shakespearean and Nigerian plays engage in assertive-related masculine attributes?
5. How do body language features in the protagonists reflect female masculinity traits?
6. Are there comparative elements in the forms and modes of female masculinity attributes exhibited by the protagonists of the eras studied?
7. Of what relevance are the features of female masculinity exhibited by the female protagonists in Shakespearean and Nigerian plays to gender and sexuality issues in contemporary society?

#### 1.5 Purpose of the study

This study presupposes that it is possible for masculinity, the construct which has almost invariably been ascribed to men, to be exhibited by women. Such masculinity may, or may not take a different form from the masculinity exhibited by men. The purpose of the study is to identify indicators of female masculinity traits exhibited either through actions by women to influence others in selected drama texts of William Shakespeare, Femi Osofisan and Zulu Sofola. The study intends to identify and analyse these clues: *dress code*, *voice act*, *assertiveness* and *body language* as indicators of female masculinity attributes reflected in the actions and behaviours of female protagonists in the texts. Equally, the effective contributions of the selected female playwright – Sofola, towards the theme of the thesis will be examined. However, the emphasis will be on the fact that masculinity is merely a socio-cultural concept and a behavioural trait, which does not mark gender or sex but could be found in individual, irrespective of gender. This study is hinged on the fact that everybody is equally created both male and female and the notion that human beings

intrinsically possess a foundational core (essence), typically associated with 'Humanism', which sets them apart from other animals. This implies that men and women share and can exhibit equal traits besides performing similar gender roles, determinant factors being time, space and events.

### 1.6 **Significance of the study**

Throughout centuries and cultures, there have been widely-acclaimed propaganda by feminists that women have been subjected to discriminatory roles and stereotypes, under male hegemony and domineering forces, as housewives, daughters and mothers. And more importantly, it has been a general assumption that women worldwide are given derogatory roles, as Tooze (2004:107) surmises, that the higher and more powerful a role, the fewer the women office holders. She claims further that women, anywhere, are generally absent from influential appointive, elective position and civil service. This is in agreement with the cultural belief that women's domain is the home. Pleck (2004:111) also submits that "nowhere in the world have women achieved equality with men; everywhere women suffer from discrimination as women".

According to Chinweizu (1990:05), little has been said about the existence of the female power which "hangs over every man like a ubiquitous shadow," a position that Primmer (1994:4) concurs with. According to Primmer

Female power exists in literary works, particularly, Shakespeare's comedies: that the power of gender is affected by genre. Thus female power diminishes in correlation with the size of the female role. Concurring with Foucault's ideas of power as a free-floating radical rather than a constant attribute in the hands of particular individuals or groups.

As such, the struggle of women from Western to contemporary societies - a worldwide movement, has brought a revolution that has transformed the way human beings now live and believe (Blair, 2004:658). Therefore, a probe into the existence of female power over men in particular and generally in all its form, will go a long way in adjusting the stresses involved when either of the sexes, especially the female, is agitating for equality with the opposite sex. This will enable the society to recognise and redress the prejudices and discriminations against either of the sexes on the platform of an assumed inequality.



It is hoped therefore, that this study will be able to proffer a long-lasting solution that will bring about sanity between the sexes. It will also help erase the hard-biting inequalities, subjugation and domineering tendencies between the sexes and the vulnerability that goes with the various movements already fashioned out in the society, in order to attract recognition.

### **1.7 Scope and delimitation of the study**

The concept of masculinity has been looked at from diverse perspectives, depending on each scholar's perception of the ideology. It has been associated with physical appearance, surgical or by behaviours. In other words, masculinity has been taken to 'consist merely or primarily of appearing male' or being perceived from transgenderism to transexuality as shown from either behavioural or performative angles. However, this study is focused on the aspect of female masculinity, which is an expression of male gender traits in women in Shakespearean and the contemporary Nigerian plays, with reference to the works of Shakespeare, Osofisan and Sofola.

An expression of female masculinity attributes consist in female-bodied persons that express some characteristics that have traditionally been considered quintessentially masculine. It is thus, a type of female masculinity, which emphasises masculine characteristics that may be displayed in a person, who does not appear in any way male. It debunks the usual fundamental claims by the feminists, especially womenfolk, that women are naturally powerless and are oppressed by men within the society; that generally, women are subservient to men at home and all housewives are exploited and subjugated.

Since the scope of masculinity concept is wide, the study concentrates on four specific areas through which female masculinity traits are exemplified: voice art, dress code, assertiveness and body language (where the female protagonists under study, such as Portia, Viola, Lady Macbeth, Morountodun, Ibidun and others exhibit their autocratic powers to achieve desires in the selected texts). It examines the aesthetic attributes within the women's power which are used to control men, at different times. In each, the diverse ways through which the female protagonists wield masculine powers to get what they want are examined. Although, these attributes may appear to be subtle and hidden, they are inevitable and undeniably effective.

## 1.8 **Research methodology**

The study adopts Derrida's Deconstruction and Nussbaum's model of Liberal Feminist theories, which state that binary oppositions relating to gender identities could be reversed, displaced and overturned for implied meanings. This implies that any of these masculine/feminine traits could be found in an individual, irrespective of the biological distinction of sex.

Eight drama texts are purposively selected based on their thematic affinities for revolutionary attributes in women and for creating protagonists whose traits reflect an interesting blend of masculine and feminine attributes. These include Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice (MV)*, *Twelfth Night (TN)*, *Macbeth (MAC)*, and *Romeo and Juliet (RJ)*; Osofisan's *Morountodun and Other Plays (MT)*, *Red is the Freedom Road (RED)*, and Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods (WED)* and *The Showers (SHO)*. The study is library-based, whereby journals, books, periodicals and other scholarly website information are employed to underpin the philosophical elucidation of these primary dramatic texts.

The methodology adopted is comparative case study as the study undertakes a comparative analysis of expressions of female masculinity traits carried out in the study through the analysis of various contexts of dress code, voice act, assertive tendency and body language.

## 1.9 **Justification**

Several other English Renaissance writers' texts are worthy of study, but William Shakespeare's texts have been chosen for the investigation because they portray female characters that reflect an interesting blend of masculine and feminine attributes. The female characters, especially the protagonists, in the selected texts are seen as fully capable of taking up male roles and behaviour. Most of Shakespearean drama texts show dominant female characters who assert their desires, knowing what they want, intellectually sound, innovative, resourceful, and able to manipulate situations positively. The choice of Shakespearean plays is borne out of the fact that Shakespeare is acclaimed to be the greatest playwright of his time. It was through his contributions that the Renaissance England attained its theatrical maturity during the reign of Queen Elizabeth the First. Equally, he is the most popular playwright who transcends and links the Elizabethan era with contemporary period ( Wadsworth, 2004:344).

He lives much with everybody everyday as scholars all over the world gather in dozens at conferences annually to discuss topics related to him. He is also a language artist, whose profound language skills in English drama are outstanding as his words and phrases have become part of everyday speech in English. His heroines are also remembered for their impact in many of his plays. He creates characters that have meanings beyond the time and place of his plays.

Similarly, the effective contributions of contemporary Nigerian playwrights -male and female - towards the issue at hand are investigated. Efforts of Femi Osofisan, one of the major male playwrights to emerge as part of the second-generation Nigerian playwrights, are significant and deserve recognition. Most of his plays unveil and portray the woman with inborn tendencies that are naturally revolutionary and affirmative. Osofisan, in his plays, refuses to replicate tradition but rather chooses to refine, modify and reconstruct it to suit the societal purposes. Most of his texts treat the positive roles that women play in society and deal with some issues that tackle other contemporary matters, such as economic, social and political.

Furthermore, Osofisan's plays depict diverse qualities that relate to all human beings. Hence, he creates characters that have meanings beyond the time and place of his plays as they are not symbolic figures but remarkably individual humans drawn from world of reality. His selected drama texts give room for the analysis of related masculine traits as manifested in his female characters. His plays deal extensively with female characters and have different positive opinions on women of his era.

There is also Zulu Sofola, the first woman playwright in Nigeria, who came on board at a time most Nigerian great playwrights were making their marks. She is the first female writer to invade a male genre as a dramatist and a director. Sofola's early artistic creation, which began from a modernist traditionalist perspective, does not alter the image of women at all in literary drama but only reaffirms the supremacy of men over women. However, her latter plays are created to "counter her spineless and passive presentation of African women" (Emenyi, 2005:90), and raise awareness about the status of women and tradition. Some of these plays display some interest in positive, healthy and assertive female characterisation.

## 1.10 **Definition of terms**

The following terms and concepts are given operational definitions to reflect the meaning they have in the context of the study.

### 1.1.1 **The Renaissance Age**

Renaissance itself emanated from a Latin word 'renascence', which literally means an act of being reborn. The renaissance (rebirth) age is applied to the historical period in Europe immediately after the Middle Age. The period marked the awakening of a new spirit of intellectual and artistic inquiry. In literature, it brought about new interest in great classical writers. Drama activities dominated the era as this new learning led to the discovery of some of the great talents of the era, like Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson, and John Webster. It was the time the greatest dramatic and poetic talent, William Shakespeare, became known.

### 1.1.2 **English Renaissance drama**

The Renaissance period witnessed a great outburst of literary creativity, painting and sculptures, especially the art of writing for the theatre. It marked a useful description of an important chapter in the intellectual, rather than the institutional, history of the Western world. Jacobus (1999:13) depicts the valuable roles this period played in literary dramaturgy:

We owe the enduring significance of the word Renaissance neither to its neo Latin writers nor its classical scholars to both of whom the metaphor was first properly applied, but rather to the giants of Vernacular literature – Rabelais, Montaigne, and Shakespeare these great figures transcended any patterns fixed by inherited intellectual traditions, they created new literary dramaturgy.

In other words, all the literary drama texts written between these eras of reformation and the closure of the theatre in the 16th Century (1548 – 1609), otherwise called the Elizabethan period, are referred to as the English Renaissance drama. The period was equally regarded as the interface for dramatic forms and the transitional link between the prior ages: the modern and contemporary ages. The Elizabethan period also witnessed many religious plays in the forms of morals, miracles and mysteries (Adedokun, 2001:27).

### 1.1.3 Gender in literature

Gender refers to the social, psychological and cultural attributes of masculinity and femininity that are based on biological distinctions. Gender is a social construct with important consequences in individual lives. It is constructed both socially through social interactions as well as biologically through chromosomes and hormone differences. The term pertains to the socially-learned patterns of behaviour and psychological or emotional expression or attitudes that distinguish males from females. Ideas about masculinity and femininity are culturally-derived and pattern the ways in which men and women are treated from birth.

However, gender is defined within this thesis as the sexed-stereotypical ways of speaking, acting, dressing and behaving which are naturally thought to be appropriate to the male or female sex. These attributes initially created the world of femininity and masculinity, which were mere socio-cultural constructs. However, these are false concepts which the plays examine, believing that both genders can engage interchangeably. The female protagonists employ them to exert control and self-will on others. This argument is explored within four specific areas: dress code, voice act, assertiveness and body language clues. The study argue, therefore, that the women's actions demonstrate that social identities could exist unaffected by gendered ideals.

### 1.1.4 Masculinity

The concept, masculinity, has been presented with different meanings and definitions by numerous scholars. Craig (2000:7) associates it with being bold, logical, domineering, and strong alongside such traits as being emotionally tough, mentally independent, tactful, and assertive. This implies that masculinity is an exceptional trait found in an individual which aggravates his or her ego, inner feelings and spurs him or her to have full control of situations at any given time.

Masculinity is the all-embracing tendency in a person that enhances his survival possibilities. It shows a person's identity through which the person or the society sees him or her as exhibiting one trait given what it means to be a man or woman. To have masculinity trait is to portray such qualities as being bold, fearless, courageous, active and some other attributes that depict action. These are traits found in either men or women who

set out to dedicate themselves to the liberation of gender disparity, not minding the patriarchal or matriarchal gender programming of the previous centuries. Since these traits could be seen in any person, irrespective of the sex or gender roles, women too possess and exhibit features of masculinity.

Onwuka (2007:6) asserts that “gender identities are socially and culturally determined, hence women and men engage in different or similar roles as dictated by the society”. In other words, the term “masculinity” is not necessarily to be associated with a person who has a biologically-male body; the attributes indicated as “masculinity” may be expressed by all kinds of bodies. Indeed, masculinity is not a fixed entity embedded in the body of individuals but it is such that is or may be a configuration of practice that is accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to gender relations in a particular social setting (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005:836).

#### 1.1.5 **Masculinity clues**

These are the masculine variables exhibited under female masculinity attributes of dress code, voice act, assertiveness and body language clues.

#### 1.1.6 **Female masculinity**

Female masculinity is a concept which came into the limelight as a necessary movement in the late twentieth century. It came up as a serious reaction to the much drummed feminism of the late Eighteenth century in Europe. It is a theory which tries to highlight the experiences of the Euro-American biologically-born female identified as masculine. It overlaps with the history of the Lesbian feminist- the male-identified women.

Jagose (2001:16) observes that female masculinity is not an imitation of maleness or pathological sign of mis-identification, as opined by Braithwaite and Daly (1994:222). It is rather a history of male-identified women. In the simplest context, at least, from Halberstam’s (1998:42) stance, female masculinity is masculinity outside the male body; but it is also a perspective with which to view gender, a gaze beyond traditional masculinity and femininity. The study of female masculinity in this realm has been integral to the dissociation of the binary gender system. Halberstam’s (1998) study of female masculinity is bent towards queer theory, where she explores a queer subject position. Therefore, female

masculinity is all the innate maleness in a woman, which propels her to exercise supremacy over others, irrespective of their sex, class, race or colour. It is the charismatic authority found in an exceptional woman of destiny who has an uncommon magnetism. This is what Ogundipe (2002:38) refers to as female power.

Female masculinity refers to all the behavioural attributes that are inherent in a strong-hearted woman, which propel her to assert self and have a full control of situations when necessary. It is an exceptional masculine trait in a woman, which coincides with the traits that have been socio-culturally ascribed to men in terms of their performed behavioural attributes as exhibiting loud assertive behaviours, independence, aggression, rebellious tactics, bravery and other traits in the society. In other words, this study is concerned primarily with the behavioural dispositions of female characters, especially where such reveal instances of masculine traits engaged to intimidate the other person. It is, therefore, perceived that female masculinity here refers to a set of behaviours or manners in terms of dressing, talking, acting and thinking. In the study, it is an expression of a particular action or behaviour that is entirely unique but subtle, present in a female person who engages in such an action and behaviour that have culturally been tagged masculine. Female masculinity is an expression of male-gender traits in females. Such attributes include being autocratic, powerful, courageous, assertive and highly manipulative, sometimes persuasive, and very often dominant and coercive in decision-making.

#### 1.1.7 Shakespearean plays

Shakespearean plays are all the plays written by William Shakespeare, one of the most popular playwrights of the Renaissance age (1546-1616). They, believed to have been written around 1592, encompass all the three main dramatic genres, namely tragedy, comedy and history. Every fact about Shakespearean plays is global phenomenon in literary studies as they were written, more than before, in a vast period when renowned writers wrote extensively on female characters, an idea which filtered in from the Graeco-Roman philosophy.

Between the mid-1590s and around 1612, Shakespeare wrote more than thirty-seven plays including *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night Dream*, *Macbeth* and others. Shakespearean plays weave together and reinvent theatrical conventions dating back to

ancient Greece, featuring assorted casts of characters with complex psyches and profoundly-human interpersonal conflicts. Some of these plays are characterised by moral ambiguity, defying straight classifications, such as purely tragic or comic, very unlike most of the popular morality plays of the Middle Ages (Charles, 1991:52). Shakespearean plays continue to grace stages and resonate with audiences around the world, and have yielded a vast array of films, television and theatrical adaptations. Most of these plays are believed to have influenced the English language more than the work of any other writer of the Renaissance age, in terms of expressions/ linguistic resources still extant in everyday conversation. Even in the Renaissance age and history of theatre, Shakespearean plays constitute a wide collection of about a quarter of the London stage.

Shakespearean plays are great for the very reason that they mingle joy with sorrow and high with low and, though they might not have conformed to the model of the ancients, they are true to life. They portray women as real women who are good, bad, old, young, strong, tough, weak, subservient, and of course everything that real women are or could be. In some of the works, especially comedies, the subject of love becomes prominent and domineering. The plays use some exciting features that make their thematic affinities conform to the fact that genderhood means same in both sexes. These works have become many things to different individuals, cultures and societies as excerpts from them are either quoted verbatim or paraphrased to add spice to serious discourses, while most of the texts have a penetrating force on the soul and nature of man in its totality.



## CHAPTER TWO

### THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

#### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter explores the theoretical perspectives and concepts relevant to the study by identifying the combined submission of feminism and feminist theories, especially Derrida's Deconstruction and Nussbaum's model of Liberal Feminist theories' approaches. It equally reviews works related to the study and meant to put the work in proper perspective.

#### 2.1 Theoretical framework

Two theoretical frameworks, Derrida's Deconstruction and Nussbaum's model of Liberal Feminist theories, are employed in the study. The selected texts are subjected to literary analysis via a comparative reading to bring out some of the female masculinity attributes contained in them.

##### 2.1.1 Feminism

Feminism has been seen as a worldview and a way of life of people - men and women - who oppose, actively, those social structures that are responsible for the restrictions of women in various areas of life (Arndt, 1998:324). It is one of the modern ideologies and poetics designed to liberate and emancipate women worldwide from the oppression and discrimination imposed on them by the society on the basis of their biological determinism and social gender differentiations. The word 'feminism' originated from the French word *féminisme* in the nineteenth century, to describe women with masculine traits among other things. When used in the United States in the early part of the twentieth century, it was used to refer to one group of women: 'namely that group which asserted the uniqueness of women, the mystical experience of motherhood and women's special purity' (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004:47). It soon became a political stance committed to changing the social position of women on the grounds that women are subjugated because of their sex and that they deserve at least formal equality in the eyes of

the law. Feminism is spawned to reveal ways in which discrimination against women manifests and how women could gain freedom and new perspective. In other words, it is concerned with securing autonomy and self-confidence for women and that they should recognise their capabilities and exploit such to their advantage.

The phenomenon defies easy definition at the moment because it takes many forms and has different goals and ideals. For instance, Adumora- Ezeigbo (2012: 6), opines that feminism is “not aggression, quarrelling or fighting for superiority – it just wants women to rise and be empowered.” She maintains that women’s ability to achieve whatever they desire towards the development of the society should be acknowledged, noting that such accomplishment can be realised through a “Snail sense Feminism”, which incorporates negotiation, persuasion and other strategies. Accordingly, feminism in this study means giving equal opportunities to men and women, believing that women matter as much as men and that both should be accorded equality. Feminism theory, according to Bryson (1992:304), demands the recognition of previously-unacknowledged achievements and powers of women in all realms of life.

Feminism is an ideology designed to liberate and emancipate women worldwide from oppression, brutalisation and ignorance. It aims at wiping out all forms of inequity and oppression through the process of creating a more just and social order worldwide. It is the advocacy for women’s rights on the basis of equality of sexes. It is, therefore, defined as the assertion of women’s rights to equality of freedom and the power to control themselves, their lives within and without the homes. It also involves the ability to have control over their own lives and bodies such as deciding on the number of children to give birth to and the career choice to ensure a sense of dignity, independence and a sense of belonging (Keohane, 2003:102). Thus, Andersen and Taylor (2009:281) rightly observe that feminism is not a simple way of thinking and acting. It fundamentally refers to advocating a more just society for women. Feminism is an attempt to win, for women their full right and power in the contemporary society, especially in the dominant political system, as well as in the social and cultural milieu.

The emergence of feminism in the early 1970s ushered in lots of feminist literary critics and criticisms whose main submissions challenge the notion that men are biologically superior to women. These criticisms also stress the need for equal treatment and solidarity

for both sexes. These should cut across class or cultural barriers in spite of struggles based on class differences (Arndt, 1997:38). The feminists, who are the advocates of this literary criticism, reiterate the need for adequate attention to women writers who have not been duly recognised through their works. Through the vast activities of these women's movements, feminism and feminist theory which seek to understand the position of women for the explicit purposes of improving their position in society, emerged. Feminist theory aims at reconstructing the image of the female - an image, which has perennially been subjected to rhythms and stereotypes under male hegemony and domination. It is a theory targeted at retrieving 'self' from the societal misconceptions of ideas and stereotypes concerning women in literature. There is the need to use these theories of feminism which is a critical movement that is steadily and radically changing the field of Shakespearean studies, particularly in 21st century. On this point, Kolin (2001:200) maintains that the degree to which feminism has been assimilated into Shakespeare's criticism is illustrated in the two books written by Juliet Dusinberre entitled *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women* (1975) and *The Woman's Part* (1980). In the two, the critic reinterprets Shakespeare's plays "either by highlighting the role of women or reading it to demonstrate the pervasiveness of the patriarchal ideas". (source of the quotation).

### 2.1.2 Feminist Theory

Feminist theories emerged from the women's movement of the early 1970s and refer to analyses that seek to understand the position of women in society in order to improve on it. Although feminist theories may be more explicit in their value orientation, as would be seen, they can be viewed as modifications and extensions of the major sociological perspectives, especially as related to conflict theory.

According to Sylvester (1995:94), at present, feminist theorising is marked by several interlocking and simultaneous tendencies. The first sees feminism as having ongoing philosophical and identity difference. Absence of consensus is defended as appropriate to the current era and as fuelling necessary debate. The second tendency expresses concern about issues of power and solidarity that such fragmentation generates. The third accounts for both solidarity and fragmentation. Although there are a myriad of subsets, the following classification provides an overview of what may be described as the main branches of

feminism with each branch rooted in, or compatible with, certain theoretical perspectives. Feminist theory equally emphasises that gendered patterns and gendered inequalities are socially constructed (Giddens *et al.* 2012:24). It is a sociological perspective that emphasises the centrality of gender in analysing the social world, particularly the uniqueness of the experience of women.

Giddens *et al.* (2012:25) posit that there are many strands of feminist theory but all share the desire to explain gender, activities in society and how to solve problems and focus on the intersection of gender race and class. Andersen and Taylor (2009:281) post that the major framework that have developed in feminist theories are liberal, socialist, radical feminism and multiracial feminism. However, the concept of liberal feminism, which is also known as egalitarian or equality feminism, emerged from a long tradition that began among the British liberals in the nineteenth century (Anderson and Taylor 2009:281). Pilcher and Whelehan (2004:37) expound that the rise of liberal or equality feminism occurred as women discovered, became conscious of, and took action to rectify their inequalities with men, especially their access to post-secondary education, pay equity, and entry into male-dominated occupations and elected offices. Thinkers, such as Derrida, Nussbaum and Betty Friedan (2001) provide women with the frameworks and language to express their economic, social, political and sexual subordination to men.

### 2.1.3 Derridean deconstruction

In considering all the selected texts from the post-structuralist feminism perspective, one may not find it easy to distinguish one theoretical approach from other approaches under postmodernist theories. According to Thompson (2003:20), “the concerns of both postmodernism and feminism are so inter-related that a useful union of both is worth articulating”. This view is also shared by Flax (1990) cited in Kanakis (2000:41). According to Flax,

Post structuralism is one of the Post-modern discourses which are (all) deconstructive in that they seek to distance us from and make us sceptical about beliefs concerning truth, knowledge, power, and the self, that are taken for granted within and serve as legitimation for, contemporary western culture.

The interwoven nature of all postmodernist theories to which both poststructuralist feminism and deconstruction approaches belong is stressed in that, while post-structuralist feminism subjects texts to as many interpretations and meanings as possible, deconstruction provides a way of handling such meanings and interpretations. Some of these meanings and interpretations may seem “rebellious” in approach because of the nature to query what is believed to be ideal. It also engages in “pulling down” textual structures, recognising that any human statement has “a multitude of responsibility for meaning that the simplest statement may be heard and thus interpreted in a variety of ways” (Doobies, 2009:156).

Deconstruction is an approach introduced by Jacques Derrida in “*Of Grammatology* (1967) to demonstrate that a text has no fixed, single and final interpretation ascribed to it at a given time. This implies that any given text has more than one interpretation. Deconstruction is premised on the fact that language is slippery and ambiguous. For instance, a sentence like: ‘Time flies like an arrow’ can be interpreted as follows

1. Time passes quickly or moves in one direction like an arrow.
2. Time (flies) - a name of a type of insect or animal – the function of an Adverbial clause.
3. Time flies prefer an arrow – object (Kanakis, 2000:89).

This theory rejects the traditional assumption that language can accurately represent reality. The theory claims that language is fundamentally an unstable medium. Hence, literary texts, which are made up of words have no stable single meaning. The theory believes that literature cannot definitively express all about its subject matter. The theory tends to shift attention from what is being said to how language is being used in a given text and, especially, to achieve power.

Deconstruction theory is similar to formalist theory, in that they both involve a close reading of literary texts. Formalist theory shows how different elements connect together to form meanings. However, deconstruction shows how a text tries to deconstruct words into mutually-irreconcilable positions. In it, an attempt is made to reject the notion that the author of a piece of work can fully control or has a full and singular control of meaning of a text (Kennedy 1999:1532). Deconstruction calls for intellectual skill and may tend to be negative or destructive, yet it may sometimes open up the most familiar text and discover its hidden significance. In deconstructionist theory, language becomes wholly ideological, as it consists of numerous conflicting ideologies or systems of beliefs or values. In other words,

a given text has several irreconcilable and contradictory meanings. The text has no fixed meaning but only what we invent and choose to believe. This means that in the literary world, there is the need to apply the theory for deconstructing literary language, especially the written. That is, meaning is not a stable element that resides within a given text for its reader to uncover and consume wholly. Meaning is only created or given to the text by the reader in the process of reading. This theory further argues that meaning is only produced by the language through the vehicle or means of the reader. Such meaning so produced by the reader has no stable or fixed element that is capable of supplying the final interpretation (Tyson, 1999:243). This is so because this school opines that a literary text, like all texts, consists of multiplicity of overlapping, conflicting meaning in dynamic, fluid relation to one another. In essence, what a reader considers to be the obvious or common sense interpretation of a given text is really ideological readings that are only dictated by the cultural values and beliefs, which one considers natural and is familiar with (Wolfreys,1999:273). It is justifiable therefore, to deconstruct the literary texts read.

There are generally two main purposes in deconstructing a literary text and either or both could be used in any deconstructive reading (Tyson,1999:252). The first approach, which is to reveal a text's undecidability, shows that the meaning of the text is not stable but really indefinite, capable of undecidable multiplicity and plurality with conflicting forms of possible meanings. This implies that the text to be deconstructed has no fixed meaning in the real sense. To really deconstruct its meanings (stereotypes) the existing interpretations of the characters, images, events, plots and so on, which are already given would be noted while noting also how these interpretations so created conflict with further interpretations to create yet another conflict. This stage could further be used to argue for the undecidable elements in the text.

According to Tyson (1999) undecidability does not mean that a reader cannot choose from the various interpretations already given or cannot, as it were, decide as to what it intends to say. It means that reader and text are inextricably bound within language's dissemination meaning. That is, both the reader and the text are interwoven cords used perpetually by language in its disseminating skills. It further means that specific meanings at a moment can give way to more meanings (Tyson,1999:252).

The second reason for deconstructing a literary text is to examine the ideological contents in the text; that is, how the ideologies in the text function or operate within human view. This approach is in contrast with a critical approach to discourse, called new critical approach, which considers how a text works in a unified manner through its theme. This approach considers the central theme contained in a text by examining its stylistic features, such as images, tone, metre, plot, characterisation and setting (Klein, 1995:3). One believes in the position of Derrida that the term deconstruction is difficult to explain since it actively criticises the very language needed to explain it. Essentially, therefore, deconstruction is a way of uncovering questions behind answers of a text (Beardsworth, 1996:4). To Derrida, “the description of how contradictions, denials and dogmatic decrees are at work in a given text is closely associated with deconstruction theory” (Tyson, 1999:253). Hence, this approach is most relevant to the study of female masculinity in both Shakespearean and Nigerian plays. It will help discover what the texts can show about the ideologies on which they are constructed. Since both approaches share similar beliefs, especially, where possibility of interpretation breeds diverse meanings after engaging in close and critical readings of a text, there would be need to merge the two theories in this study. For instance, Ikueologbon (2011:111), its that the very basic way to go about deconstructing a literary work is to

X-ray all structures in the text and bring to the fore hidden (silent) meanings as well as highlight what seem unimportant when conflicting meanings are discovered, the text has by implication deconstructed itself.

Derrida, the chief proponent of deconstruction, favours the idea of binary thinking and prefers one over the other in the pairing that occurs. As Culler (2003:4) asserts:

A major focus of deconstruction has been the traditional binary oppositions that have structured western thought since the time of the Greeks. For example the oppositions between inside and outside, male and female, presence and absence powerful and powerlessness.

Each of the pairs is otherwise perceived as a hierarchy with the first being regarded as the primary, while the other is secondary. As Ikueologbon (2011:110) notes: “Binaries are not fixed or static but fluid as they can be challenged or changed while the list goes on”. It is the idea of believing one opposition as having primacy over the other that Derrida

challenges through deconstruction. He is of the opinion that reversing the opposition in the hierarchical order opens new opportunities for new meanings, the new meanings being the direct result of new thinking, new way of doing or undoing the text. This will only be made possible with the consciousness that the relationship between binary oppositions is unstable.

The focus of this study is then directed on the activation of masculine attributes inherent in women to control, persuade and achieve their aims without necessarily doing it in such a way that men would within the societies examined. The alternation is given to investigating masculinity performance through dress code, voice act, assertiveness and body language clues, among others.

#### 2.1.4 Nussbaum's Liberal/ Equality Feminist Theory

Liberal feminism is one of the several 'types' of feminist theoretical directions called Modernist Emancipatory feminism, which began in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It offers useful instance of Modernist positioning concerned with what is universal to human, as it assumes that, over time, society and the self will be liberated. It holds the notion that humans intrinsically possess a foundational core (essence), typically associated with 'humanism', which sets them apart from other animals.

Liberal feminism is synonymous with feminism *per se* (Beasley, 1999: 51), which remains a powerful and pervasive 'type' of feminist theory today, having its ideology solely based on gender equality. It holds on to two major traditions, which are more or less indebted to its Universalist humanism (Martin, 1999:159–62). These two traditions are the individualist tradition (Mill and Wollstonecraft) and the collectivist tradition linked to Rousseau and Marx.

Liberal feminism, in whatever variant, believes in the importance and 'freedom' of the individual, in terms of rights or claims (Minnow and Shanley, 1996:23; Beasley, 1999: 51–3). All individuals are to be 'free' to make their own way and their own wealth. It upholds the notion that the social and political rights of the gender-neutral individuals reside in their humanity, that is, in what distinguishes them as human, which is their ability to reason. The ability to reason means that individuals do not require the help of another person to put up a solution to matters. Individuals (i.e human beings) do not need the assistance of an external body to trigger off spontaneous reasoning faculties towards



contributing positively or otherwise. Reasoning is inherently built. However, eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries liberalism uses the gender-neutral language of ‘humanity’, ‘individual’ and ‘reason’, to deliver its point on equality. Therefore, the early liberal feminists advocated the extension of this gender-neutral standard to women, to give them access to full adult citizenship within the liberal capitalist society (Tapper, 1986:20; Corrin, 1999:62). They propose women’s inclusion in the liberal universal standard of humanity and offer a form of thought in which ‘the individual’ (the full adult citizen) is a ‘descendant of the enlightenment concept of an autonomous rational being and associated with the ability to reason’ (Gunew, 1990: 17; O’Neill, 1999). According to the liberalists, this enlightenment thinking, a collection of ideas, claims that all who can reason are capable of independent thought and action and, hence, should be able to participate in things that concern people in the society. Liberal feminism’s ideology of universal standards of humanity, equality and reason, asserts equality and liberty for all. The equality and liberty in this regard refer to the fact that only those human that are capable of reasoning, irrespective of the sex, can be granted the status of belonging to the universal standard of humanity. Only they are to be regarded as autonomous persons, individuals and, therefore, eligible to public rights and freedoms. Liberal feminists opine that full social participation and public life involve women and that any fixed social hierarchy of medieval custom be countered, while equal social status be extended to include women who constitute half of the populations of Western and contemporary societies (Beasley, 1999: 4).

These feminists, in common with other liberal feminists of the early twentieth century, drew on the liberal tradition’s value of equality and individual freedom to argue that, just as social status at birth was no longer a legitimate basis on which to discriminate among men; so also sex at birth was no longer a legitimate basis on which to discriminate against women (Ackerly, 2001: 5499). Liberal feminism, from its earliest forms to the present, focus on the elimination of constraints facing women and gaining equal civil rights for women as public citizens. Its overall orientation as a political intervention is to assimilate women more comfortably into a basically masculine model of social life without significantly altering discrepancies between the existing differential roles of men and women.

This position tends to be the major tenets of the second-wave liberalists, which emphasise the improvement of women's legal and political position as a group, undercutting the individualistic characters of the earlier liberalists continues to be firmly oriented towards enabling women to become like men. Hence, second-wave liberal feminism is concerned with strategic but collective political aims, which remains recognisably liberal to enable women to achieve the status of autonomous 'individuals' in public life as equals (Beasley, 1999 : 30). Nussbaum's socio-political agenda identifies her work more closely with the second-wave liberal feminism. She, nonetheless, follows Wollstonecraft's concerns and talks specifically about the works of J.S. Mills (1806–73), who is seen as the father of liberal feminism (Beasley, 2005:51). Nussbaum's ideas show more on some of the features of contemporary liberal feminism, which dwell much on gender equality, highlighting on some of the issues associated with the notion of reason and the universal 'human a particular version of Liberalism that highlights women's position. This version rejects the patriarchal divine right of kings, hereditary power, fixed social hierarchy and arbitrary- rule over any being who possesses reason (just like Derrida). This theory of Nussbaum does not ignore women's possible differences from men but asserts that these do not exclude them from reasoning or the rights that are attendant upon reason. It includes women in the notion of a universalised reasoning of human and rejects fixed/eternal rule over them (Corrin, 1999:22). It applies enlightenment ideas to women's situation, arguing that as men and women share a universal human capability of reason, so women also deserve the same rights and opportunities as men. This agrees with Bryson (1992: 159) that liberal feminism is based upon the belief that women are individuals with ability to reason, hence, entitled to full human rights and freedom to choose their role in life as well as explore their full potentials in equal competition with men.

Kensinger (1997:12) equally agrees with Nussbaum's opinion that 'reason' generates the capacity to be an individual, since it gives such a person the freedom to choose rather than having to be told what to do. It enables one the freedom to compete with other choosing persons. Hence, reason becomes a 'universal truth of human-ness (a universal human essence)' which is linked to political, cultural and social equality – that is, the capacity for, and right to, public participation. Reason becomes the means to argue for entry into 'Humanity and the means to rights, justice and social fairness. The argument goes 'If I

can think, I can make decisions, and thus there is no reason for my exclusion from public decision-making.' (Nussbaum,1994:48). The theme of belief in a human essence is characteristic of Modernism, while the framing of this essence as individual reason is profoundly liberal. Nussbaum therefore puts forward a liberal feminist position, precisely that of being against convention (Portia, Juliet, Ogwoma, Obina decry (the) customs that intimidate women). Reason, in this case, enables one to see that what presently exists (gender disparity) is not necessarily immutable or prescribed by nature. Reason overcomes the particular forms of social power because it is not part of the structure of such power but outside it. Nussbaum affirms that reason can persuade powerful people to act against their own interests, even to give up power. In this sense, reason is an impartial, objective positioning from which to speak. To Nussbaum, the one who speaks with reason is on the side of an objective, neutral truth that is beyond the particularities of personal social positioning. Based on this, she advocates equality among genders (Charlesworth, 2000:64-5).

#### **2.1.5 Liberal/Equality Feminist Theory**

Liberal feminist's notion of equality, according to Bryson (1992:163), is a state or condition of being the same, especially, in terms of social status -legal or political. Historically, in Western societies, men have gained a higher social status, legal and political rights than women. In late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries in Britain, for example, 'equal rights' feminists campaigned to extend to women the key rights and privileges (in relation to education, property, employment, and the vote) previously enjoyed by men. By the late twentieth century, a range of legislation was in place (including the Sex Discrimination Act and the Equal Pay Act) aimed at facilitating equality between women and men, through the Prohibition 37 of Discriminatory Practices (Bryson 1992:163). What is central to feminism and gender studies is the fact that equality requires all women treated the same as men, irrespective of differences.

Pilcher and Whelehan (2004:37) maintain that the rise of liberal feminism or equality feminism occurred as women discovered, became conscious of, and took action to rectify, their inequalities with men, especially access to post-secondary education, pay equity, and entry into male-dominated occupations and elected offices. Thinkers, such as

Simone de Beauvoir (1989), Martha Nussbaum (1999) and Betty Friedan (2001) provide women frameworks and language to express their economic, social, political, and sexual subordination to men. According to Etuk (2013:295), liberal feminists:

assert the equality of men and women through political and legal reforms. It is an individualist's form of feminism, which focuses on women's ability to show and maintain their quality through their own actions and choices.

Equally liberal feminists understand and address women's problems in the society as "simply one of the many prejudices, strongly believing that women can achieve equality with men without necessarily altering the structure of the society".

Lindsey (1997:14) is of the opinion that liberal feminism, also called egalitarian feminism, is considered the most moderate branch and it is based on the simple proposition that people are created equal and should not be denied equality of opportunity on gender basis. She observes that liberal feminism is established on the enlightenment tenets of faith in rationality, a belief that women and men have the same rational faculties, belief in education as the means to change and transform society, and belief in the doctrine of natural rights (Lindsey, 1997:16).

In the equality perspective, therefore, gender is regarded as an attribute that should not be significant in the distribution of social value or rights. Equality is to be achieved through gender-neutrality or androgyny. However, this can mean that the goal of equality is achieved through the assimilation of subordinated groups (women, gay men) to the values, institutions and lifestyles of dominant groups (men, heterosexuals).

Gender equality, therefore, denotes women having the same opportunities in life as men, including the ability to act and participate in the public sphere.

Liberal feminism or equality, as espoused at the Women's International Conference in Beijing platform (1995:4), means that the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of individuals will not depend on being born male or female. Equality does not mean "the same as" promotion of gender, and it does not mean that women and men will become the same but that socio-cultural abilities and capabilities be acknowledged despite biological differences between men and women. Equality between them has both quantitative and qualitative aspects. The quantitative (parity, representation) aspect refers to the desire to achieve equitable representation of women's increasing balance and parity, while the

qualitative aspect refers to achieving equitable influence on establishing development priorities and outcomes for women and men. Equality of gender transcends equality of opportunity. It recognises that men and women have different needs, preferences and interests and that equality of outcomes may necessitate different treatment of men. The conference concluded that equality involves ensuring that perception, interest, needs and priorities of women and men (which can be different due to the differing roles and responsibilities of both men and women) are given equal weight in planning and decision-making. Thus, these equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities are interwoven with 'human rights and social justice.' According to Baker *et al.* (2004:202),

A rather different dimension of equality is what we call respect and recognition. What liberal egalitarians tend to identify as an adequate minimum standard are things like the equal public status of all citizens, together with the idea of tolerating differences and allowing people to live as they like within certain 'private' spaces like their families and religions. They accept that there may be important inequalities of esteem among people, but that everyone should have a certain basic status.

Gender equality underline the need to change the structures in society which contribute to maintaining the unequal power relationships between women and men, and to reach a better balance in the various female and male values and priorities. UNIFEM (1996:3) states that gender equality means accepting and valuing equally the differences between women and men and the diverse roles they play in society. Since this equality means discussing how it is possible to go forward, and to challenge all socio-cultural structures that call for unequal power relation between genders, there is need for men and women to reach a better balance in their various values and priorities. Equality, therefore, involves using the competencies, skills and talents of each individual and every citizen through inter-relationships among citizens within the society, not minding gender difference.

Therefore, liberal/Equality theory is relevant to the study as it defines all the attributes inherent in gender-neutrality through which maximum equality is attained and where women are enabled to participate with men as equal citizens in the society.

## 2.2 Essence of Shakespearean English Renaissance drama to the development of Nigerian contemporary literary writings

The choice of the English Renaissance era in comparison with the Nigerian contemporary literary experience endeavours is borne out of the opinions of a number of critics such as Wiles (1987) cited in Richmond (2002) and Adeleke (2007) that some dramatic works produced by several playwrights are said to have Shakespearean semblance. Adeleke (2007:35) observes that Marston's *Anthonia's Revenge* produced by the Paul's boys share similarity with Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, while noting that Shakespeare is taken as the forerunner of some of these playwrights as 'their ideas and writings have invariably become an expansion of Shakespeare's idea or writing'. Adeleke (2007: reiterates further that even Shakespeare's contemporaries, like Robert Green, Christopher Marlowe and a host of others are said to have been 'indebted to him as he also has been indebted to some other artistic traditions and cultures'. It then presupposes the point that most of the writers from other countries that have had the opportunity of perusing Shakespeare's works while in school would have been influenced by them. This indicates that the 'Shakespeare-centric drama' tradition has found its way to different cultures and it is possible to talk of 'Shakespearean import' or Shakespeare in whatever culture. Abodunrin (2004) in Adeleke, (2007:35), therefore, affirms that "some creative writers have adapted some of his texts or ideas to suit their own immediate environment". The issue here is that writers tend to emulate popular culture that may likely enjoy the reception of readers. For these reasons and more, Barkan (2001:33) writes:

To enumerate the qualities that make Shakespeare great is impossible, since the individual plays and poems are so different from one another. Every age from Shakespeare's time to the present has found something different in him to admire.

It is further believed that "all ages however, have recognised his supreme skill in inventing sharply etched characters, for the characters do seem to speak and act as of their own volition, with combination of inevitability and unpredictability that one finds in living human beings' (Barkan; (2001:35). As centuries have passed, his genius eclipses all others of his age; none of Jonson, Marlowe, Kyd, Greene, Dekker, and Heywood approach the craft or the humanity of character that marks the bard's work.

According to Primmer (1994:9), Shakespeare is a proto-feminist because his works directly support and develop feminist ideas and that female parts and power are supreme in his comedies. She further sees the age within which he wrote these plays as one of new liberties for women as his most subtle characters join and juxtapose masculine and feminine traits, reflecting an interesting blend of masculine and feminine attributes. Women have had cause to exhibit their powerful statuses at one time or another, even though not as militant as men. Cases where women demonstrate the power in them – an evidence of the fact that power is not gender-biased, is the focus of this study. Therefore, part of this study centres on how women's form of masculinity is put to practice in some selected drama texts of the renowned English Renaissance playwright – William Shakespeare.

### **2.3 Development of drama from the English Renaissance through Contemporary Ages**

Drama, otherwise called play, is a story, real or otherwise, that has been put together and considered suitable for performance. It is a form of literature that is intended for performance by actors and actresses on stage. It has the capacity to hold up an illusion of reality, as it is like a reflection put on to imitate a real action. Dramatic activities have been in existence from time immemorial, exploring different approaches, with different playwrights coming up with diverse plays, to mark out different eras. In essence, generations from time to time have been involved with the issue of dramatic performance, exploring different approaches, with different playwrights coming up with diverse dramatic activities that distinguish particular era from the rest.

There are different stages and eras of drama. One of such ages is known as the Renaissance Age, which witnessed a great cultural movement in Italy in the early 1300s. The word 'Renaissance' itself is a Latin word "renascence" which means rebirth. It represents an age when many European scholars particularly from Italy, studied and acquired the learning of the Ancient Greek and tried to recapture the spirit of that culture in their own literary and artistic works (Adedokun, 2001:24). The period overlaps with the end of the Middle Ages of the 14th century. This period witnessed the highest influence of the church on literary activities, as the age was highly religious and playwrights drew stories from the Bible. After the Middle Age was the Renaissance era, between 14th to 16th

centuries. The Renaissance age specifically refers to the “rebirth of interest in the civilization of Greece and Rome” (source). The Renaissance began at different times in different areas of Europe and was a slow process of change rather than a sudden shift in values and ideas. It was an attempt to recreate classical drama. It was at this period that the classical plays of Greece and Rome were discovered and critically studied. It was from the Renaissance Age in Italy in the 15th century A.D. that the revival of learning began to have great effect on drama as lots of drama works and playwrights came into prominence during the period. Because of its vast increase in learning, coupled with sparkling enthusiasm, playwrights like Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson were influenced by the classical drama of the previous ages (Adedokun, 2001:25). No wonder, Adedokun (2001:25) further opines that “it was a unique age that devoted itself to scholastic exploration of classicism”.

#### **2.4 Shakespeare and the English Renaissance Drama**

The English Renaissance drama refers to all the English drama texts written between the Reformation and the closure of the theatres in the 16th century (Ebi, 2005:38). For more understanding of the role of women in the Renaissance Age, there is need to examine how dramatic activities of the time came into existence. Renaissance era in European civilisation overlapped the Middle Age of the 14th century. It witnessed a great surge of interests in classical learning and an outburst of literary creativity. The era featured all sorts of religious plays which transformed into English drama in the 16th century. What became known as the English Renaissance drama came into being in England when the dramatic output of the Renaissance which arose in Italy became somewhat disappointing. At this period, England contributed immensely to the dramatic creativity of the period, featuring playwrights, including William Shakespeare, and Ben Jonson. It came as a result of what some scholars called “a happy blending of the existing views of life, the Medieval and Renaissance periods” (Jacobus, 1999:70). It was the period of the rediscovery of learning as everything had to be rediscovered. This witnessed the birth of classical Greek and Roman plays, and later the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramas of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which ushered in great plays and the playwrights of the time.



This period also includes the umbrella name Elizabethan, which became more oriented towards the tastes and values of an upper-class audience. It led to the emergence of some notable playwrights of the Renaissance Age whose writings dwelt on poetry and Elizabethan drama, which were moralistic in nature. The clergymen of the Elizabethan age ran “a never end” campaign against women who were taken to be “Eves” or “temptresses” responsible for men’s wrong doings and shortcomings (Jacobus, 1999:98). However, Shakespeare, the most popular playwright, and few of his colleagues wrote less moralistic plays while some were on radical changes and effective roles of women in the society. These positive views possibly resulted from the fact that women began to have education and that gave them a new status; indeed, Hudson (1991:27) asserts that “during the 16th century, it seemed that the influence of women became real as life for them became more refined”.

During this period, scholars developed interest in searching for and translating the lost texts whose dissemination was assisted by printing in Europe. It was an era of the rediscovery of learning which was devoted to the scholastic exploration of classicism while every area of knowledge was critically researched into until new inventions were discovered. Academic and professional dramas too emerged fully during this era. Hence, the period was christened as the period of the rebirth of learning, a time of revival of classical learning and wisdom after a long period of stagnation and decline of cultural learning and antiquities (Boyce, 1990:534). However, it was in the early 16th century that renaissance began in England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth 1. In the renaissance age, art and literature reached an unprecedented level. Renaissance age was also distinguished from the previous ones as it marked new interest in learning which ushered in new forms of worship and other developments in science and politics (Wadsworth, 2004:232).

Drama activities, as Wadsworth (2004:232) expatiates, flourished in Spain and in England, where drama dominated the era as learning too led to the discovery of some of the great talents of the era, namely Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson and John Webster. It was at that time also that the greatest dramatic and poetic talent, William Shakespeare, became known. The age equally marked the beginning of prose writing, an aspect of the influence of the protestant Reformation on literature which also brought about translations of the Bible to different languages (Wadsworth, 2004:235). Among the writings of this era, Shakespeare’s

works emerged the most outstanding for creating poetic drama which characterised the many faces of womanhood. He portrays women as real characters that are brilliant, good, bad, tough or weak (Safra, 2005:345). His plays comprise comedies such as *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Twelfth Night*, and *A Mid Summers Night's Dream*. The Tragedies are *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, and *Julius Caesar* among others. All these and the tragicomedies have intrigued and challenged his audiences, playwrights and actors overtime. His works have been translated, adapted broadly and closely drawn upon in the creation of new works that rely upon the audience's awareness of, and affection for, Shakespeare (Banham *et al.* 2002 cited in Adeleke 2009:106).

It is noted that Shakespeare shaped the conventions of his play into instruments for expressing life as it relates to love, marriage, hatred, revenge, politics, exercise of power and a host of other thematic issues. These resonate in his dramatic texts as he tries to make reality out of illusions while trying to narrate his dramatic stories with theatrical effectiveness. From the foregoing, it is glaring that contemporary age too has not been exempted from the list of what Adeleke (2007:105) refers to as "Shakespeare's peripatetic incursion to different cultures." According to him, Shakespeare's series of seminal studies have breathed new ideas into the 21st century dramatic inventions as well as a new development, which was generated through diverse adaptations and translations of his texts into different languages. This brought about a form of cultural exchange as individuals began to come up with different studies indicating the mobile and dynamic nature of his plays (Wells and Stanton, 2002:XV). It was from these studies that most of the contemporary playwrights began to treat themes that are revolutionary and radical by appropriating Shakespeare's touch, even in the thematic level.

Shakespeare has become many things to different individuals, cultures and societies and excerpts from his works are either quoted verbatim or paraphrased to add spice to discourses. Adeleke (2009:105) agrees with this when he submits that "most of his texts have a penetrating force on the soul and nature of man in his totality". He explains further that "the issue of appropriating Shakespeare's materials transcends linguistic realms, as some writers do appropriate his plays, his themes, his images or possibly his characters; depending on individual's whims" (Adeleke 2009:105). Subsequent periods - the Romantic,

Victorian, Restoration, and the contemporary age – across the world, Nigeria inclusive, see something quite interesting in Shakespeare's plays (Hudson, 1991:27).

This study touches on some of the issues and ideologies in vogue in the contemporary age, a fallout of the Shakespearean era of the Renaissance age. It, however, considers women's masculine attributes in selected plays of Shakespeare. It equally examines the ideologies and concepts related to masculinity as exhibited by the women in the selected plays of some playwrights in the contemporary Nigerian society.

#### **2.4.1 Concepts of gender: masculine and feminine ideologies**

The concept of gender in feminist writings and other sociological discourses became popular in the early 1970s. In simple terms, gender explains the differences between men and women in social terms as men, and what a man can and cannot do, and as women, and what a woman can or cannot do. Therefore, gender is an analytical category that is socially constructed to differentiate the biological difference between men and women. The term 'gender' is also used to describe the differences in behaviour between men and women, which are described as masculine and feminine (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004:56).

Feminist writings focus on this aspect and claim that these differences are not biological but social constructions of patriarchal society. Some theorists suggest that the biological differences between men and women also result in their mental and physical differences. They argue that biologically, men are physically and mentally superior to women. Other theorists suggest that the biological differences between men and women are exaggerated. The differences are socially constructed by the patriarchal system of society by which men are described as superior to women.

The concept of gender needs to be understood clearly as a cross-cutting socio-cultural variable. It is an overarching variable in the sense that gender can also be applied to all other cross-cutting variables, such as race, class, age, and ethnic group. Gender systems are established in different socio-cultural contexts, which determine what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman/man and girl/boy in these specific contexts. Gender roles are learned through socialisation processes; they are not fixed but are changeable. Gender systems are institutionalised through educational systems, political and economic systems, legislation, culture and traditions. The concept of gender is not interchangeable with

women. Gender refers to both women and men, and the relationship between them. According to Mathews (1984) in Pilcher and Whelehan (2004:56), the concept of gender gives recognition to the fact that every known society distinguishes between women and men. Therefore, the term “gender” is a systematic way of understanding men and women socially and the patterning of relationships between them. The concept helps to study the differences in behaviour between men and women and to analyse the basis of the differences as basically biological or social constructions by the society.

Gender, in its narrowest sense, means socially-constructed sex, be it female or male. It was in the 1970s that American and English feminists started using the terms “gender” and “gender relations”. Hence, the transition was made from the “study of the differences between the sexes... to relations between the sexes both in the sense of social relations and conceptual relations” (Hurtig and Rouch,1991:12). The word “gender” developed at a remarkable pace in the early 1980s (Nairobi Conference, 1985) in English-speaking and Latin American countries and also within all international organisations. Its usage was facilitated by the holding of a succession of important conferences, such as the Cairo Conference (1994, 1995) during which the term definitively established itself. Yet, if one were to contemplate the subversive nature of the concept of gender, one would wonder why the term became such a catch word (Hurtig and Rouch, 1991:12). Concept of gender then implies the process of grouping together all the differences identified between men and women, whether they are individual differences, differences in social roles or cultural representations, that is, the grouping together of all that is variable and socially determined (Hurtig and Rouch, 1991:12). In simple terms, gender refers to the socially-constructed roles, responsibilities, identities and expectations assigned to men and women. It contrasts with the fundamental biological and physiological differences between men and women, which are known as secondary sex characteristics. Gender roles differ between cultures and communities and overtime.

The argument that gender is socially-constructed means that it varies (across cultures, times and between members of the same sex), rather than varying between the sexes, as biological determinism would dictate. The emphasis on the constructed nature of these categories is meant to signify that there is nothing natural, inherent or biologically inevitable about the attributes, activities and behaviours that come to be defined as either

masculine or feminine (Zalewski, 1995:341). It contrasts with the fundamental biological and physiological differences between males and females, which are known as secondary sex characteristics. For many, gender is in binary terms: man/woman or masculine/feminine. Expectations of women and men are limited by these binaries, and are communicated through sex role stereotyping. These stereotypes limit gender-appropriate behaviour to a range of rigid roles assigned to women and men on the basis of their gender. For example, 'women are nurturers' and 'men are aggressors'. These role expectations are subtle and deeply ingrained. However, there is great diversity in how individuals express their gender which frequently does not conform to these stereotypes. Not all women fit the stereotypical expectations of femininity, just as not all men fit the template associated with masculinity. Therefore, gender is an analytical category that is socially-constructed to denote the biological difference between men and women.

Gender is mostly used interchangeably with sex, but it is purely social, rather than biological. It is the socially and culturally constructed roles for men and women within families and across various cultures. Gender is thus "the expectations held about the characteristic aptitudes and likely behaviours of men and women in terms of femininity and masculinity" (Kray, and Thompson, 2005:125). The concept of gender is important in that it reveals how woman or man's subordination is socio-culturally constructed. Gender is, therefore, an essentially dynamic concept, which brings into question the apparent immutability of social roles. The smooth running of any given society depends solely on the socially-constructed roles and expected behaviours associated with men and women of such a society (*World Bank*, 2001:201). In most cases, it is possible for the society to perceive both sexes differently or equally. However, as human, they live in a world where who they are or what they do matters as well. That is, how different are they from one another and in which area do they differ? What is important about the way men and women behave in society? These and many more issues are being raised and taken care of in gender matters.

Gender means the social or cultural classification of roles into male and female status and the expectant behaviour ascribed to each within the society. Craig (1993:18) submits that the terms 'gender', 'masculine' and 'feminine' are considered to be sociological terms whose definitions are more on cultural expectations of behaviour. This means that certain signifiers and behaviours are culturally associated with either male or

female. Kisangani (2002:15) avers that gender issues ‘represent a body of debates which interrogate the various ways in which the identities of masculinity and femininity have influenced patterns of human life’. These terms have been socio-culturally defined differently.

In other words, gender refers to those meanings derived from the division of male and female and thus, to the attributes considered appropriate to both masculine and feminine (Traub, 2001:129). It means that gender exists primarily as constructions of particular societies. What it means to be a woman or a man, or desire the same or the opposite sex varies from culture to culture and changes historically. Because this concept varies from society and culture, not all people fit into the roles ascribed to them. For instance, there are those called transgender people who feel that they have been born into a body in which their gender identity and their physical sex are not coherent. The terms transgender and transsexual are used to describe this phenomenon. Generally, transsexual people have had surgical intervention to change their physical characteristics to match their gender identity, while transgender people have not. Many people who are identified as transgender choose to live their gender identity rather than their physical or genetic sex. The transition from one gender to another can be painful and difficult. Transgender people are not transvestites. Transvestites are people who cross-dress, that is, they choose from time to time to wear the clothes of the opposite sex. One area in which women have greater freedom of expression than men is in how they dress, thus, women are rarely called transvestites when they choose to wear what was traditionally known as men’s clothing.

Gender is constructed both socially through social interactions, as well as biologically through chromosomes, brain structure, and hormone differences. Gender refers to the social, psychological, and cultural attributes of masculinity and femininity that are based on biological distinctions (Stets, and Burke 2006:998). Gender pertains to the socially-learned patterns of behaviour and psychological or emotional expressions or attitudes that distinguish men from women. Ideas about masculinity and femininity are culturally-derived and pattern the ways in which men and women are treated from birth onward (Kisangani, 2002:17). It is an important factor in shaping people’s self image and social identities. Gender is learned through the socialisation process and, thus, is an achieved status. Gender is a major source of social inequality whereby not only are men and women assigned

different roles, but these roles are also judged and rewarded unequally. Gender is a social construction with important consequences in everyday life. For instance, gender roles which are stereotypes define men as strong, rational, dominant, independent, and less concerned with their appearance. Women are stereotyped as weak, emotional, nurturing, dependent, and anxious with regard to their appearance. Gender stereotypes also hold that men and women are inherently different in attributes, behaviour, and aspirations.

A society reveals its concept of gender through the social roles assigned to each sex. A social role is a set of expectations and behaviour associated with a specific position in a social system. A gender role then, is a social role associated with being male or female. The argument that gender is socially-constructed means that it varies (across cultures, times and between members of the same sex) rather than varying between the sexes, as biological determinism would dictate (Traub, 1992:234). Gender theory thus distinguishes between sex and gender; use both distinctly as independent variables; and seek to analyse the scope, context and logic behind what overlap exists between the two. The concept of gender helps explain variations across same-sex distributions, cultures, and periods. The concept of sex explains uniformity within same-sex distributions and variation between the sexes. Ogundipe (2007:12) submits that “gender is the stated roles that are ascribed to men and women based on what is perceived to be their sex in the society. It is a culturally-shaped group of attributes and behaviours given to the female or the male”. She further opines that ‘bodily’ functions only do not determine the roles ascribed to people in society. Hence, gender, independent of the body and its politics, only deals with “the interactions of both men and women and the relations of power between them, at all levels of society” (Ogundipe.2007 13).

The men have naturally been ascribed with traits, such as being tough, strong, heroic, domineering, and sexually aggressive. They are also seen as the breadwinners in their homes. On the other hand women have been erroneously attached with such attributes as being weak, emotional, domestic, submissive, sexually passive, intuitive and dependent. Masculinity is then perceived as a cultural ideal, which exhibits such qualities as forcefulness, toughness, confrontational and unreserved willingness to take risks. Therefore, gender categorisation affects many aspects of a human’s lifestyles in that it entails interacting with others as well as the expectations from them, within the society. Hussein

(2005:59) submits that gender ideology is a systematic set of cultural beliefs through which a society constructs and wields its gender relations and practices. This gender ideology contains legends, myths and narratives about what it means to be a man or a woman and suggests how each should behave in the society. In other words, gender is a social or cultural categorisation of roles for males and females. For instance, women have been victims of gender ideology in Africa, where feminine traditions are portrayed, in general, as being foolish, weak, dependent and frivolous (Hussein, 2005:60). The menfolk are believed to be more intelligent than women, while the latter are thought to be incapable of having foresight and lack the ability to make sensible and realistic plans (Oboler, 1985 in Craig, 2003:18). For this reason, it is generally agreed that husbands should administer the family estates, while their wives should concur with their husbands' plans. It is commonly claimed that if a woman tries to manage property, she would very likely fail (Craig, 1993:18). The concept of gender is thus, central to every culture and all that is needed is a conceptualisation of gender matter that recognises multiple cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity, as well as research that exceeds traditional discontinuing of being male or female.

Kolawole (1998:8) is of the opinion that much of the ongoing research reveals some fundamental attitudes and beliefs about women which validate women's luminal space or trivialise their achievements in areas of visibility and power in societies. This implies that the concept of gender in our society could depend on several variables that may not solely depend on body type and that the women are not correctly represented as regards the roles they could play or their achievements in the society. As though the society has perceived gender as two different entities that have been stereotypically assigned with specific roles, such roles are neither static nor uniform, as every culture determines or dictates what roles are proper, what to do and how to do such at a given time Onwuka, (2007:4). As a matter of fact, women or men or both could engage in different or similar roles as determined by the society. To justify the foregoing, gender role defines masculinity as having power and being in control in emotional situations. Gender relationship is a vital practice as it influences the lives of men and women and the roles they play and the power they wield. It determines the opportunities and the privileges each have. According to Riley (1991:9), "gender affects both power to which is – the ability to act and often requires access to social resources such as education, money, land and time and the 'power over' which is the ability to assert one's wishes and goals even in the face of oppositions from others". All these show that gender is



not an existing identity or social characteristics of being man or woman, but mere stereotypes that each culture or society has ascribed to either men or women.

The above position is reiterated by Rogers and Larson (1991:72) who define gender as “socially constructed differences which form the basis of inequality, oppression and exploitation between the sexes”. In summary, gender studies hold that there is a distinction between gender and sex; while sex is a biological property, gender is a cultural construct, the social construction of behaviours, rather than the biological condition of maleness and femaleness (Abolaji 2011:76). Furthermore, Salih (2002: 46) explicates on the fact that gender is separate from biology because it is merely a cultural construction, and that a person with a female body, for instance, can choose to perform masculine responsibilities.

In order not to be misinformed by the different opinions in respect of gender capabilities or abilities, there is need to examine the masculine traits of the womenfolk in selected literary drama texts of the two ages in question. But for that to be done convincingly, the concept of feminism and feminist ideologists which tend to be terrorising the menfolk, recently, would be briefly traced and discussed.

## **2.5 Development of feminism, feminists and gender theories**

Feminism, as a word, was derived from the Latin word ‘femina’ meaning ‘pertaining to women’. According to Freedman (2002:11), the word ‘feminism’ comes from the French ‘féminin’ and ‘-isme’ which means ‘women’s movement, It means “the belief and aim that women should have and share equal opportunities with men”. To Smith (2004:653), it is “the belief that women matter as much as men”. It is an instrument of social liberation and emancipation. According to Sanya (2001:2), feminism is:

A world view and a way of life of women and men who actively oppose social structures responsible for the discrimination against and oppression of women, on the basis of the biological and social gender.

Feminism is even harder to define now because it takes so many different forms and has so many different goals and ideals. This in itself is problematic because there are so many different issues in every society that it is impossible to know where the priority should lie. Feminism is a lot more than a dictionary definition. It means resisting oppression, freedom of choice and freedom from gender pressures. Feminism can signify women’s rights, gender equality, past achievement, or simply be an insult. With so many different

definitions and interpretations for a principle that is essentially the same the world over, and no identifiable archetype, it is of little wonder that feminism has been so difficult to define. The third wave brings a whole new meaning to the word 'feminism'.

Feminism, according to Palmer *et al.* (2007) in Eyeh (2011:2), emerged as a new political movement in the early nineteenth century, though the term itself did not appear until some women in France began to refer to themselves as "feminists" because they drew on the legacy of the French revolution and its concepts of human rights". Feminists argue that the rights of man exist also for women. Thus, it is a kind of universal adult suffrage. Hence, feminism is actually as much of a men's movement as women's. There is, therefore, no universal definition of feminism.

According to Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (2004) "feminism is both an intellectual commitment and a political movement that seeks justice for women and the end of sexism in all forms". Feminism, therefore, challenges the basis for oppressive relationship between men and women as different gender groups. Feminism, as a social theory, also decries the anomaly in the roles ascribed to individuals based on gender in the society while highlighting the negative aspects of tradition and customs that favour men above women. As a literary theory, it equally encourages a realistic reflection of women's abilities and capabilities as well as considering both their positive and negative attributes as portrayed in their behaviours. In an attempt to expose the patriarchal norms and attitudes of a society to subjugate women, feminism tries to focus on the experiences of women and rewrite such.

However, there are different kinds of feminism which have been motivated by the quest for justice. Feminist inquiry, according to Akorede (2011:57), provides a wide range of perspectives on social, cultural, literary and political phenomena, which translate into major theories developed in various academic disciplines, like Medicine, Law, Languages, and Literature. She further submits that feminism is concerned with women not just as a biological category, but as a social category. For instance, feminism is not the hatred of men, seeking to have a sex change, behaving as men or feel empowered to be in a male-dominated society. Rather, according to Ogundipe (2007:9), 'it is a body of social philosophy that advocates and actively seeks the liberation and humanisation of women in society.' It is all about describing and documenting women's experiences and asserting their rights (Adebayo 2009:18). In the same vein, Eyeh (2011:2) defines feminism as:

The fight for women's right involved more than a struggle for tangible goals like equal pay, equal opportunity. But a fight for the very right to fight, to assert one's demands, to declare that one's ambitious and needs are as important as those of men.

Also, Egberibin (2010:15) agrees with Patricia Waugh (1975) who sees true feminism as that which "seeks for a subjective identity, a sense of effective agency and history for women which had hitherto been denied them by the dominant culture".

From the above, it is clear that feminism is a revolutionary approach by a group of people that does not see the need for stressing the biological differences between both sexes with regard to responsibilities and positions in the society. This ideology reveals the way in which discrimination against women manifests itself and where women can gain new freedom and scopes. It is concerned with autonomy and a new self-confidence for women, and that women recognise their own capabilities and exploit them to the fullest. Feminism also demands the recognition of previously-unacknowledged achievements of women of note who have thrown their weights into the affairs of the societies of their time.

In considering the origin of feminism, it is possible to argue that it is as old as history. It is not a crude thing, as it has a history and indeed, a number of histories. Janeway 1973 cited in Eyeh (2011:2) remarks:

Women's history is fragmented, interrupted: a shadow history of human beings whose existence has been shaped by the efforts and the demands of others". However, the woman's movement indeed, is seizing on the old, demanding image of women, the old submissive identity, in order to escape from it by overthrowing it.

It has taken different forms at different times. For the purposes of this discussion, feminism as a theory would be examined focusing on three major dimensions that emerged in the 1970s. There are, of course, other variations, as well as overlaps among the three dimensions, but each stemmed from a different theoretical explanation of why women are where they are in the society. They each share a different set of priorities for responding to and bringing about social change. All the three tendencies of feminism, namely the radical, bourgeois and socialist, share three important features as affirmed by Wandor (1998:262):

All three tendencies seek to bring about some sort of changes in the position of women. All the three challenged the idea, and the fact, of male dominance. And all the three tendencies assert the importance of self determination for women.

All the tendencies wholly challenge the crudeness of a biological determinism that claims that women are biologically weaker and inferior to men. They further establish the fact that women are powerful and could be intimidating, if one goes through the archives and memory lane and re-examine the roles played by women of yester-years. All the three categories challenge the oppressiveness of different aspects of the social (sexual) division of labour that pervades the society.

Feminism, as an intellectual and ideological consciousness, began much later in Africa. Apart from the few foremothers of feminism, such as Ama Ata Aidoo and Zulu Sofola, there are other modern feminists, like Ogunjipe Leslie who sees feminism as “stiwanism” which advocates the inclusion of African women in the contemporary, social and political transformation of Africa. However, according to Chukwuma (1994:7), “feminism’s question is not of superiority or otherwise, but that of complementarity and the proper recognition of women in the scheme of events”. It, therefore, holds the notion that “feminism must be seen through the lens of ‘motherism’, an alternative to aggressive or radical feminism which holds that, ‘women are in no way disadvantaged with respect to men’”. It, therefore, advocates for complementarity of both sexes and not their equality (Arndt, 1997:338).

Achufusi (1994:103) recognises a common struggle with African men for the removal of the yokes of foreign domination and Euro-American peoples. African feminism, in whatever form or name, seeks to bring about the establishment of more equitable conditions, better understanding and mutual relationship between men and women. “It importantly seeks to provide the opportunity of re-evaluating negative attitudes to and misconceptions about women as aggravated by the African culture and traditions of the Western societies” (Wandor, 1998:267). Radical feminism to Wandor springs from the direct response of all women to the day-to-day irritations, which women feel and experience. Radical feminism amplifies, analyses and politicises details of oppression, as

well as challenges the notion that men are biologically superior to women. This feminism sees men as the primary 'enemy' and everything that is 'bad' in the world.

Bourgeois feminism simply seeks the larger share of social power for a small number of "women at the top". It takes the stance that although men and women are different in gender, they can be equal in status. Bourgeois feminism asserts that if women really want to and try hard enough, can make it to the top and it adds that women have added strength to their status and can use their feminine wiles, which this study assertively calls female masculinity, just to achieve their aims. Bourgeois feminism stresses further the need for women to take charge of territories normally seen as the male preserve, thereby providing a place, a model or an image for women as "a responsible agent determining her own life and development" (Wandor, 1998:267). This is a kind of naked confession made to the autocratic power females sometimes wield to oppress, if possible, the opposite sex.

Socialist feminism recognises the fact that there are times and issues over which solidarity between the sexes can cut across class or cultural barriers in spite of struggles based on class difference. It seeks the underlying reasons for women's subordination. It sees the issues of gender, race and class as integrated issues that "reinforce and feed on each other" and must not be treated separately for the adequate understanding of women's subordination and oppression. Socialist feminism does not give priority to economic oppression, it rather rewards working-class mates and gives them control over women. This is because women's work is less valued as it is seen not to produce exchangeable goods. It is a more radical interprets that interpretes the origins of women's oppression in the system of capitalism. Because women constitute a cheap supply of labour, they are exploited by capitalism the same way that the working class is exploited. To socialist feminists, capitalism interacts with patriarchy to make women less powerful, both as women and as labourers. Socialist feminists are critical of liberal feminism for not addressing the fundamental inequalities built into capitalist and patriarchal systems.

Despite the above complex ideologies and feminists' ideas, it is imperative to approach the evaluation of drama from a political point of view with caution if there is need to understand what the writers, especially of drama, have been doing before the 1970s and up to date. One recent development shows how women are becoming more and more influential in drama. It also reveals the way women now use the term 'actors' as if it were

the generic term to include 'actress' (the usual feminine attribute) as part of its meaning (Wandor, 1998:266). Although the above usage has caused ripples among some ideological fanatics, it remains an indicator of the fact that the womenfolk have power and use such to achieve their goals contrary to the general notion that women suffer discrimination on the basis of their gender difference.

Feminism assumes different dimensions and meanings to different groups. Women all over the world view it from different angles and thus, interpret it differently. Tong cited in Sanya (2001:4) posits that feminist theory is not one but many theories or perspectives, attempts to describe women's oppression, to explain its causes and consequences and to prescribe strategies for women liberation. An observation like this is justified in the identification of the three theories of feminism according to Wandor (1998:267): the Radical, the Bourgeois and the Liberal. However, this discussion will be based on two broad and all-encompassing theories: the Liberals and the Radicals.

The claim of liberal feminism is that the womenfolk are marginalised by being denied good education and are hardly given political posts. These feminists then resist being marginalised and they legally fight for women's rights. The liberals also make a case for women's rights in public spheres of life. They do not separate or analyse power relations in existence at home or in private life. Although they believe that women, as a group, are at a kind of disadvantage, it is up to the individual woman to make the most of the opportunities as soon as all other rights to education, employment, and so on have been won. Condorcet, the French male writer according to Wandor (1998:267), is the foremost advocate of this liberal approach for he sees it as an integral part of a complete pattern of liberalism. The liberalists believe in the attainment of freedom of the women through legal efforts and litigation to enforce these rights. On the other hand, the radical feminists of the 1960s, argue that men's patriarchal power over women is brought about by the primary power relationship in human society. To the radical feminist, all men are to be seen as the enemies who oppress women in all spheres of life. They should therefore, be resisted. Radical feminists have little or no regard for the social norms and traditions that undermine women. They, according to Bryson (1992:304), advocate struggles at all levels against any patriarchal moves, and are sometimes involved in autonomous women organisations. They, however, allow for a union with menfolk in terms of work. They hold the idea that man,

whether sexual predator or tyrannical husband, is the natural enemy of woman. Radical feminism, to Bryson (1992:304), is essentially a theory of, by and for women. It is firmly based on “Women’s own experiences and perceptions and sees no need to compromise with existing political, cultural perspectives and agenda”. It is thus aimed at putting an end to any existing ‘patriarchy’. It further claims that women should unite in common sisterhood, irrespective of class or race, to struggle together to achieve liberation from both public and private oppressed life. Among such radical feminists are Mary Astell (1666 – 1731) of England and Kate Millett, a German.

From the foregoing, feminism is an ideological project which must be executed in the peculiarity of its idioms and strategies. The feminist aims could, accordingly, be those which intend to deconstruct the image of the female – an image that has perennially been subjected to rhythms of prejudices and stereotypes under male hegemony and domination. It is also targeted at retrieving the ‘self’ from the patriarchal subjugation of, specially, the fathers over all members of the household, in particular, the wives. Again, there is a sense in which feminism “testifies subversively against male subjugation and its chauvinism that refuses space to the females. It further seeks to inscribe the female self in the contours of a society under phallic oppression and repression” (Tsaaior, 2000:19).

There is no doubt that these are lofty ideas as the success of the feminist project all over the places could be measured by the observation that currently, women take part actively in professions hitherto considered exclusive reserve of men (Ibitokun, 1995:17). Success of this kind is a result of various activities and research programmes that uplift womanhood and inspire women to get liberated from the societal structures that have marginalized them (Ibitokun, 1995:17). These activities in Africa, and in particular, Nigeria, include feminist literary writings. Women writers write in such a way that is directed at exciting the feminists’ project and strategies according to Kolawole (1998:8) who further reasons:

The post colonial woman 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 experiences, she has, also, to subvert and demythologize indigenous writings and traditions which seek to label her experiences.

Sotunsa (2008:6) agrees with the foregoing by referring to the aims and aspirations of the feminists as a “scholarship which is aimed at ‘deconstructing’ the established predominant male paradigms and ‘constructing’ a female perspective which foregrounds the female experience”. Eyeh (2011:6) equally reveals that “feminists value and admire the act of being women as much as being human. They see themselves as strong, capable, intelligent and successful ethical human beings”. He further maintains that feminists recognise women’s strength in the face of oppression and are optimistic about the possibilities of a change.

As lofty as the above ideas are, only few scholars have cared to confess openly how intimidating the hidden and persuasive power of these women have been in the society under the pretence that they are being oppressed. Hence, an attempt will further be made to consider the differences or interrelated identities that have been culturally or socially assigned man or woman, male or female by his or her society – that is, the gender identities in terms of masculinity and femininity.

## 2.6 **Masculinity and femininity concepts**

Masculinity and femininity are concepts which signify the social outcomes of being male or female. These are the traits and characteristics which describe men and women and give men advantages over women. The concepts of sex/gender differences raise the issues of male and female, masculine and feminine; the male being associated with masculinity and female with femininity. With each construction, the biological differences between men and women get translated into social terms and descriptions.

Masculinity or femininity is otherwise known as one’s gender identity which refers to the degree to which a person sees himself as being masculine or herself as feminine depending on what it means to be a man or a woman within a given society. This means that femininity or masculinity is embedded in one’s gender – social constructs rather than one’s sex – which is biological. The concepts, masculinity and femininity, define certain traits as typically male’s and so masculine in nature or as typically female’s and so feminine in nature. In feminist writings and gender studies, therefore, these concepts are known as social differences between men and women within the society.



However, to Fashina (2009:73), femininity is describable as comprising elementally, the social, psychological and cultural forces of morality, virtue, peace, patience, faithfulness any of which can be found in a male or a female character. It is the members of the society that decide on what being male or female means and whether the men should be ascribed with such traits as dominant, brave, tough and the women be passive, emotional and soft. Generally, men will be defined with masculine features while women with feminine because these are social definitions. Femininity and masculinity or one's gender identity refers to the level at which one sees oneself as being masculine or feminine in lieu of being a man or a woman within a given society.

The variables of masculinity and femininity are embedded in the social cultural dictates in the society and are not biologically determined. The socio-cultural dictates as contained in one's gender and not the biological, that which is contained in one's sex. It is the members of society who decide what being male or female means and are ascribed with such constructs. For example, it is the social definitions given by the society to functions attributable to being male or female that are binding on being a man or a woman. Naturally, a man would see himself as exhibiting those social constructs or identities ascribable to him such as being dominant, brave, tough while the woman would abide by definitions such as being passive, emotional and soft.

Sociologically, gender identity involves all the meanings given to oneself on the account of one's gender identification which one gets identified with. Therefore, a person who identifies himself with masculine identity acts more masculine by engaging in gender role-behaviours whose meanings are more masculine in terms of being more dominant, competitive, coercive and autonomous in manner. It is not the behaviours themselves that are important, as Ashmore (1996:9) observes, but the implied meanings given to such in any society that demand further reasoning. Thus, the meanings ascribed to one's gender begin at birth, are formed within the social situations and later stem from ongoing interactions with parents, peers and other factors. The fact remains that people view themselves from the feminine and masculine dimensions of meaning.

There are some major theories that explain the development of femininity and masculinity. The psychoanalytic theory of Freud (1972) which claims that one's gender identity, that is femininity or masculinity, develops through being identified with the same-

sex parent. This develops, according to Stets and Burke (2006: 1000), out of the conflict inherent in the oedipal (strong sex attachment) stage of psychosexual development.

The cognitive developmental theory of Kohlberg (1966), which suggests that there are critical events which are otherwise cognitive in nature, which have a lasting effect on gender identity development. This implies that the development of gender identity comes before being identified with same-sex parent. This means that a child gets self-identification as being either male or female when hearing the labels 'boy' or 'girl' from the society. Such a child without wasting time gets fixed with whichever appropriately applies to him/her. The child grows, he/she gets to know that his/her ascribed gender identity will not change despite his/her outward appearance or age.

The third are the learning theories Weitzman (1979) encompasses in the social environment of the child. The parents, schools and teachers are the possible agents that shape the gender identity of a child. For example, as the child develops, the parents at home begin to instruct such a child to behave along feminine and masculine variables through direct reward and punishment or by acting as role models appropriate to the gender of the child. Direct rewards, such as in what to wear, toys to play with and behaviours as in passivity for baby girl and aggressive resistance for a baby boy are carried out. As the child develops, it begins to imitate a rewarded model feelings, behaviours ascribed his sex and that have been adequately and positively rewarded.

Hence, Noble (2004:10) opines that masculinity is best discernible the further it travels away from the male body, and that much can be learned about the "truths" of masculinity outside the construct of "man". She avers that masculinity has nothing to do with being a man alone as female masculinity could mostly be represented by the lesbians, but not exclusively. She elucidates further that masculinity is not the opposite of femininity, as either could be altered across time, location, class and ethnicity.

However, it is possible for one to be female and see herself as behaving in a masculine way or male and see himself as being more feminine. Generally, there is a difference between one's gender, that is, gender identification and the expected behaviours given to such gender, which is, the gender roles and the personality traits (stereotypes) the society ascribes to such individual.

Judith Butler's theorisation about gender introduces the notion or idea of performance of gender in terms of masculinity and femininity. To her, performance of gender becomes involuntary as gender gets internalised through the socialisation process within the dominant discourses of patriarchy where gender is performed at different levels within the family and in the society. She thus, agrees that one socially enters into gendered categories of masculine and feminine right from birth.

According to Stet and Burke (1996:193), gender identity, which is masculinity or femininity, involves all the meanings that are applied to oneself on the basis of one's gender identification. They expound further that "a female person does not just automatically possess the feminine virtues only because she is female, neither is the masculine personality incapable of these virtues because of his gender. Rather, there are ideal behaviours and qualities of social civility and integrity which both male and female can possess to make them qualify to be classed in the paradigm of the "human feminine/masculine". This paradigm includes the moral principles that govern a person's behaviour.

Zalewski (1995:22) opines that gender is about masculinity and femininity, measured in socially-constructed and contextually-contingent ideas about what attitudes, attributes and behaviours correspond to ideal-type maleness or femaleness. Nevertheless, ideas about masculinity and femininity pervade discourses that impact thinking, action, and outcomes. Hence, McInnes (1998:16) opines that a person with a more masculine identity acts more masculine by engaging in behaviours whose meanings are more masculine, such as behaving in a more dominant, autocratic, competitive and tough manners, while it is the opposite in case of the one with feminine identity. In any case, it is not how people behave that matters, but the implied meanings given to such behaviours.

Individuals within a given society begin to draw upon the shared cultural conceptions of what it means to be male or female as such conceptions have already been transmitted through education or religious institutions of the society. This implies, therefore, that, by so doing, they come to see themselves deviating from their naturally-ascribed identities. Therefore, a person may be called or identified as female, but instead of behaving stereotypically as such, she may begin to see herself behaving in a stereotypically masculine way, such as being rational, autonomous and dominant. People have views of themselves

along feminine-masculine line, some are more masculine while some are a mixture of the two. Whichever dimension one picks marks his or her behaviour in the society.

However, some studies have cleared the issue that measures of gender identification have no bearing with innate traits, so that identification has only been based on socio-cultural conditions. There are no differences in traits and temperaments between the sexes. Hence, any observed differences in temperament between men and women are not biologically determined but of socio-cultural expectations accruing to either sex. It further implies that masculinity-femininity traits or rather gender-related traits, roles or identities could not be tied to being male or female, either could behave at will.

The above point is further confirmed when anthropologist Margaret Mead (1988) addresses the issue of differences in temperaments of men and women in her study, *Sex and Temperament in three Societies*, in 1988. The study concludes:

There are no necessary differences in traits or temperaments between sexes. Observed differences in temperament between men and women were not a function of their biological differences. Rather, they resulted from differences in socialization and the cultural expectations held for each sex.

Mead (1988) goes further in her research to observe that in one of the three societies examined, both the men and women displayed traits considered to be masculine temperaments – such as active, and competitive, but in another, both displayed traits attributed to feminine such as passive, cooperative and expressive. Going by Mead's observation, the issue of assigning gender-related traits, temperaments and identities could no longer be inextricably tied to biological sex of being male or female. It further implies that masculinity or femininity traits could be demonstrated by any persons, irrespective of their biological differences but depending on socialisation and the cultural expectations expected from either sex. Masculinity is therefore, sex-biased, as any of the sexes could be masculine or feminine, depending on the meanings that people attribute to themselves as their gender identities (masculine or feminine), which are sometimes more important in determining how they will behave than their gender -male or female.

Masculinity refers to a cluster of norms, values and behavioural patterns expressing explicit and implicit expectations of how men should act and represent themselves to others.

Ideologies of masculinity and of femininity are culturally and historically constructed, their meanings continually contested and always in the process of being renegotiated in the context of existing power relations. Africa, as Achebe (2000:99) submits, is an important site for studying the social construction of gender, since some scholars have argued that African gender identities have been particularly fluid and contentious, heavily-articulated with wealth, age, seniority, and ritual authority (Amadiume, 1987; Matory, 1994, and Achebe, 2000). It is important to emphasise that there is, theoretically no limit to the number of genders in a given society.

In Nigeria, research, according to Lindsay and Miescher (2003:53) provides concrete examples of the capacity of gender to transcend biological sex, theorised by European and American scholars (Butler 1990, 1993). They submit that research on Africa shows that in specific circumstances “masculinity without men” (Halberstam, 1998) can be ordinary and part of accepted gender experiences as in the institution of the “female husband” among the Nandi people in Kenya (Oboler, 1980), in Igbo societies of Nigeria (Amadiume 1987, Achebe 2000), and elsewhere (Lindsay and Miescher, 2003:53).

Female masculinity means women’s attainment of positions or characteristics usually regarded as the preserve of men, like those women chiefs in colonial Lesotho, who acted as “honourary men” (Epprecht 1995 in Lindsey and Miescher, 2003:53). In the Igbo “dual sex/flexible gender” system, female and male political/economic hierarchies exist in parallel (Amadiume 1987).

This means that individuals could change their genders in certain contexts. Lindsay and Miescher (2003:54) provide evidence of a female warrant chief exercising power in a role gendered as male in northern Igbo land very well in the colonial period. The fact that men could exhibit feminine traits is seen in historical incidents of African forms of (male) homosexualities. There is also an indication that men could embrace and embody qualities associated with femininity, as shown from the young male “wives” in South African “mine marriages” or ‘the yan daudu’ in relation to their sexual partners in present-day Hausaland of Nigeria. (Achebe, 2003:5).

Fashina (1997: 96) is of the view that

man and woman share equal reasoning. The woman is first and foremost a human before being a woman. Thus the platform of humanity occupied by both man and woman provides that natural equilibrium of both sexes. The woman and the man are capable of equal level of reasoning, socialisation, civilisation and even primarily speech activity, because as one scholar says human beings probably learnt first to speak (homo loquent) before they learnt to think or to reason (homo sapiens).

At the same time, Goodwill (2009:21) acknowledges that female masculinity is most commonly associated with women who “look like men”. There are examples of such women who ‘eschew traditionally masculine behaviours and attitudes; conversely, there are many examples of feminine-looking women with masculine ways of thinking and behaviours.

This point is confirmed in a research by Spencer and Drass (1999:363):

Persons with a more masculine gender identity irrespective of gender as male or female are more likely to use overlaps, interruptions and challenging statements in a conversation. Similarly, it is possible for one’s gender (male or female) and one’s gender identity (masculine or feminine) to each result in different displays of behaviour.

Spencer and Drass (1999:363) further explain that it is not the behaviours themselves that are as important as to determine gender categorisation, but the meanings implied by those behaviours. For instance, a person may label herself female but instead of seeing herself behaving in a stereotypical female manner as being soft, submissive and subordinate, she may see herself behaving somewhat in a stereotypically-masculine pattern. Therefore, being masculine or feminine depends on socio-cultural perceptions of the society and the interpretation the society places on individual’s behaviour. Masculinity is not gender-tied but a matter of identity.

### 2.6.1 Perception of masculinity in Shakespearean Era – the Renaissance Age

The way in which Renaissance society viewed men and women’s roles differed greatly. Men were generally seen as having the ruling voice as fathers, husbands, masters, teachers, preachers, magistrates, soldiers and lords. In that age, masculinity was defined in

contradictory ways, all depending on man's role in society. It was seen from the legal, secular and sacred (religious) perspectives (in other words from both the historical and social contexts). The way in which Renaissance society viewed men and women's roles differed greatly. Men were generally seen as having the ruling voice as fathers, husbands, masters, teachers, preachers, magistrates, soldiers and lords

Historically, ideas surrounding masculinity were inherited from the classical literature and the Bible. These sources support men claims to superiority over women, thereby creating a definition of masculinity that was based purely on men dominance and virility. For example, it is believed that men were intellectually and morally superior to women, that male domination was the will of nature and the Bible, believing the fact that men were made in the image of God, while the women from men's ribs, they are naturally inclined to rule (Leann, 2008:2).

According to Laskaya (1979) in Leann (2008:3), it was a religious philosopher named Philo that formulated this belief with his teaching that "men were superior to women because males 'symbolised the rational parts of the body while females, the irrational parts, like the bodily functions and desires". Leann (2008:4) expantiates further:

Fora woman to progress spiritually or be accepted as being intellectually progressive, she must give up every aspect that relates to her feminine specie; that of female gender and her sexuality.

This critic also opines that "as long as a woman is for birth and child-bearing, she is different from men as the body is from the soul. But when she wishes to serve God more than the world, then, she will cease to be a woman and will be called man". (Source ) From the above, masculinity in the renaissance era was based on three operative agenda: that of impregnating women, protecting dependents and providing for the family. Thus, men who failed to live up to the set standards were labelled feminine and weak and would lose their status within the community.

With these patriarchal ideas firmly established, masculinity was solely attributable to men and connected with dominance and control, particularly, over women. But with time and as the society progressed, the concept associated with masculinity was restructured. Many positions were created within the church and secular jobs as well that required the attention of both men and women. This was so because the male occupational roles could

not be gendered as expected as the absence of women could not guarantee the men's masculinity status either through supporting a dependent female or impregnating her to show their fertility. The second reason as raised by McNamara (1987) as cited in Leann (2008:2) is that celibacy brought upon a growing number of men meant that "there would be a surplus of unmarried, unprotected, uncontrolled and undefined women roaming the street". Thus, these many unmarried women were made to also join the clergy, which allowed both genders to associate with each another, not minding gender roles.

The idea of cross-gendered roles enabled womenfolk to gain power and accord themselves the right circumstances. For instance, some women began to have access to knowledge or started to educate even men in reclusive communities (McNamara,1987), in Leann 2008:2). With these new changes, the gap between both genders was to be restored but only through violence as men resorted to beating and torturing their wives, believing it would check them from misbehaving (Lukaya, 2002 in Leann 2008:6). This further established the level of oppressive, discriminatory and demeaning roles women in the renaissance era were subjected to. Thus masculinity became solely ascribed to men and men's property.

### **2.6.2 Concepts of masculinity in the contemporary society**

The concepts of men and women, male and female, are relatively easy for people to understand. This is because these words are related to biological differences of one's sex, which is what one is born with and cannot change. It is therefore, understood by everyone. But the concepts of masculine or masculinity, feminine or femininity are much less closely related to biological being, hence, are much more difficult to separate into two overlapping categories as one gender can be more or less feminine or masculine. One's gender identity as being masculine or feminine is based on the meanings individuals have become internalised from their association or interaction with the role played by male or female in the society. Being masculine or feminine becomes a kind of self meaning given to the roles by individuals, and as inferred from behaviours and expressions in which the person engages. Gender identity is one of many role identities people hold.

Creig (2000:7) claims that 'masculine' in some culture is associated with "being athletic, sexually aggressive, logical, domineering, unemotional as against the 'feminine',



which is associated with being weak, domestic, emotional, sexually passive, intuitive, and dependent.” He also sees masculinity as a biological destiny used to refer to the innate qualities and properties of men that distinguish them from women. Craig (1993,) quoted in Adesida (2006:13) refers to it as masculinity with status. This means that men, by nature, are ascribed with such traits as being mentally, emotionally and physically tough, and self-dependent. This presupposes the fact that men are naturally not like women who do not exhibit all the above traits. Therefore, masculinity as a concept is a useful tool with which to explain men’s nature or nurturing. Cixious (1981) in Evwierhoma (2002 :19) gives a list of binary oppositions in defining masculine qualities, such as activity or passivity, day or night and sun or moon, seeing the negative attributes as ascribed to the feminine side. Therefore, it is widely believed that masculinity is solely exhibited by men as it is solely men’s nature, which explains better the differences as well as the inequalities between men and women.

Masculinity predetermines the features known as ‘masculine advantages’ by which men are genetically characterised. Such traits include aggression, which contradicts the passivity of femininity; the physical strength, in contrast to the weakness of femininity; and sexual drives, which is in contrast to the sexual reserve of femininity. On this, Evwierhoma (2002:20) observes that “some privileges have been naturally or wholly ascribed to males as against the females”. She stresses further that men have been privileged to hold the fort on political, economic and cultural matters, arising from their masculine advantages over their female counterparts. Women on the other hand, have been pushed to the background on matters connected to heroic deeds in the society.

Furthermore, Hussein (2005:61) views masculinity as a gendered ideology possessing both the materials and social representations of the psychological, social and physical potency of men in a sexist society. This will be taken that the stereotypes about what constitutes the masculine ideal have long been emphasised in all means of livelihood. Masculinity has been seen as the cultural ideal, which exhibits such qualities as dominance, forcefulness, endurance, confrontation, self-reliance and unreserved willingness to take risks. It also includes such qualities as fearlessness, boldness, determination, aggressiveness, tactfulness brilliancy, honesty, and an unflinching ability to withstand stress. These are some of the positive traits that could promote mutual and peaceful inter-relationship among

humans and their development. These features, which have been so ascribed to masculinity are such that by human reasoning, cut across both genders in that anybody or person can exhibit any of the traits, irrespective of the sexuality or gender roles. Masculinity is, therefore, not a property that could solely be ascribed to men alone, as Connell (1995:16) quoted in Adesida (2006:6), cautions that the terms 'men', 'male' and 'masculinity' should not be used interchangeably to mean one entity. Munro (2000:20) describes masculinity as an archetypal trait that is recognised in men or women in every culture that moves them toward specific ways of being and acting. He goes on to identify such unique qualities as such that "embraces heroic self-sacrifice" and "has the potential for good or evil deed". It is a masculinist's job to protect life and be expendable.

Adesida (2006:3) claims that the concepts of gender studies are dependent on various variables which are not based on body type, as male or female. This implies that what matters is not whether one is a man or woman but if one possesses and exhibits these variables of masculinities, then one is masculine irrespective of one's sex, men or women. This is so because the terms, masculine and feminine, are socio-culturally defined as the case may be according to the gender roles and identities so interpreted for men and by the society. Masculinity is the exceptional trait inherent in a male or a female, which transcends his or her ego, fears and selfishness, while he/she makes a sacrifice of him or herself as a gift to those he or she is called to protect or is expected to protect. It is a man's or woman's identity in the natural order to defend, protect, and be a leader. That is, to be an advocate, a warrior, a lover, a counsellor, and at times a natural dictator. Therefore, masculinity can be rightly described as the all-embracing inborn tendencies in a person that enhance the survival possibilities of the person. These traits could be found in any person, irrespective of the sexuality or gender roles, which implies that women, too, do possess and exhibit unique features of masculinity.

Onwuka (2007:6) argues that since gender roles are those that have been socially determined by the society, women and men can engage in either different or similar roles, depending on the expectations of the society, at a given time. Since gender roles are socially determined, they are neither static nor uniform, each culture dictates what is proper for a particular sex at a given time. Consequently, men and women engage in either different or similar roles depending on what the society expects of them. This flexibility or interwoven

roles of the sexes are illustrated in Amadiume (1987:35) when she gives an example of an equal gender status referred to as “manly hearted women”, meaning the biological women who work, marry and become parents as men would; she calls them ‘the female men’. The key point, therefore, in the study is that female masculinity pertains to what a woman does and how, not what she looks like.

### 2.6.3 Female masculinity

In the world, men are expected and assumed to be masculine, acting to distinguish themselves in various ways such as exercising dominance over the women, displaying violence, and being autocratic in nature. All the traits and others as exercising control, authority and any other physical abuses, elevate men to positions of power through which they have been perceived as lords over all other beings, especially, women. The women, on the other hand, are expected and taken to be feminine, acting to establish cooperation with, and be sensitive to, the needs of others even by ignoring their own needs. These assumptions notwithstanding, in this age, there are new sensibilities of and sensitivities to issues in general. Men are beginning to be aware of their feminine sides, while women are trying to be more masculine as evidence shows that something hidden or buried in the shared psyche now forces men and women to come to deal with their inherent roles, consciously or not. Thus, for both males and females, masculine traits are expressions of power and of concern with ‘self’. In other words, masculinity represents a natural and spontaneous expression of masculine power that is embedded in an individual, irrespective of the sex.

At this point, it suffices to say that masculinity needs not necessarily be restricted purely to people born in male bodies. As Halberstam (1998:2) points out, female masculinity has frequently manifested in all societies as “what we understand as heroic masculinity has been produced by and across both male and female bodies”. Female masculinity is becoming more and more evident in social life as well as in literary representations as expressed in many different ways. For example, Noble (2004:xi) suggests that, “Female masculinity references a range of subject positions – drag king, butch, female to male (FTM), trans-gendered man, stone butch”. Noble does not clarify precisely what she means by masculinity, or by female masculinity, but it seems clear from the subject

positions that she associates masculinity with physical appearance. According to Goodwill (2009:76), all the physical appearance mentioned by Noble (2004) in the subject positions present an appearance that is more commonly associated with biologically-male persons.

Moreover, there is femininity, which connotes that some traits or behavioural tendencies which are naturally opposite masculinity, could manifest in any being the sex, notwithstanding. By this, we mean that anybody could exhibit any trait that is inherent in such a person when required. This further means that as there are feminine males in a masculine world, so also are the masculine females who exhibit all characters that are socio-culturally ascribed to the males even in a patriarchal society. Discourses of masculinity are available, used by and imposed upon both men and women as Sedgwick (1995:291) confesses that she also produces and consumes masculinity as men would. Female masculinity is becoming more and more evident in social life as well as in literary representations. Moreover, it is expressed in many different ways. Adams (1999:1) sheds more light on this while quoting from Halberstam:

I was a masculine girl," she writes, "and I am a masculine woman. For much of my life, my masculinity has been rendered shameful by public responses to my gender ambiguity. However, in the last ten years, I have been able to turn stigma into strength. "To make my own female masculinity plausible, credible, and real" and to begin a discussion on masculinity for women in such a way that masculine girls and women do not have to wear their masculinity as a stigma but can infuse it with a sense of pride and indeed power.

Goodwill (2009:10) observes that female masculinity consists features within the female-bodied persons, through which some characteristics that have traditionally been considered quintessentially masculine are expressed. Hence, female masculinity is commonly associated with women who look like men, while conversely, there are many examples of feminine-looking women with masculine ways of thinking, talking, acting and behaving. Inness (2004:14) corroborates this fact, noting, that "clothes do not make the man, and neither do short hair cuts, but rather, it is what a person thinks and does that denote masculinity". Therefore, the fact that women could think, talk, act or behave in diverse ways related to men's is enough evidence to prove the existence of masculine attributes in them. According to Okonjo (1987:5), the concept of female masculinity is like

a 'dual-sex system which contrasts with the single sex system – obtainable, in most parts of the Western world'. She posits that biological sex does not always correspond to gender, which means that a woman could play the roles usually ascribed to the menfolk, or simply put, women could be classified as 'males' in terms of power and authority. This statement means that masculinity goes beyond gender stereotypes as it expresses the totality of the operative characteristics within a person (male or female) at a given time, through which his or her survival possibilities and abilities are enhanced. It is within the frameworks of Modernist 'emancipatory' or liberationist thinking that the social-political rights of individuals reside in their humanity which is, their ability to reason.

The ability of reasoning in any individual, irrespective of the gender, presupposes that women are not better or worse human beings than men and wherever there are any differences in them, they are only products of social and cultural conditioning. Okonjo (1987:5) perceives this division of feminine and masculine as 'spurious complications of human relationships and calls the effects of such conditioning 'gender'. Estes (1997:125) avers with Okonjo's dual-sex system. She explains:

This dual nature in women sometimes causes men and women themselves, to close their eyes and hail heaven for help. The paradox of women's twin nature is that when one side is more cool in feeling tone, the other side is more hot. When one side is more lingering and rich relationally, the other may be some-what glacial. Often one side is happy and elastic... the other has a longing for "I know not what". One sunny, the other bittersweet and wistful. These "two-women-who-are-one" are separate but conjoined elements which combine in the psyche in thousand of ways.

Along this realm, it is noted that while each side of a woman's nature represents a separate entity with different functions and discriminates knowledge, both sides function as a whole. This variable is what is that unhidden masculinity in a woman which is likened to 'the strength or power or symbol endowed to twins who have been endowed with supernatural powers'(Estes, 1997:126). To her:

a woman has tremendous powers when the dual aspects of psyche are consciously recognised and beheld as a unit held together rather than held apart. The power of the two masculine duality is very strong, neither side of the duality should be neglected, for together they bring an uncanny power to individuals and cannot be broken.

Halberstam (1998:41) posits that the history of female masculinity slightly overlaps with the history of lesbian feminism, which is more of a history of male-identified women. This female gender theorist tenaciously maintains this theory marks a unique place for cross-identification in genderhood matters. To her therefore, female masculinity makes the important and timely proposition that it is possible to study masculinity without men. In fact, masculinity itself becomes complicated as well as 'transgressive' when it is not tied to male-female theory. Female masculinity, an assertion of self-will or female power or matriarchy (Ogundipe, 2002:31), could then be taken to be all the innate maleness in a woman which propels her to exercise supremacy over others, irrespective of their sex, class, race or colour at a given time. It is not just an imitation of maleness but an assertion of self-will of authority which is unquestionably imposed on available subjects at a given time. Masculinity in a female refers to "the charismatic authority found in an exceptional woman of destiny who has an uncommon magnetism of attraction" (Ogundipe, 2002:32).

A female masculinist is an individual with a personified splendid idea, who attracts huge crowds of people with her lifestyle, powerful, and autocratic messages and a unique but persuasive commanding physical presence. Weber (1992) cited in Ogundipe, (2002:32) defines masculinity as power or a process by which one achieves one's goals whether one carries others along or not. Masculinity is synonymous with power, which has to do with the ability to control others or have the rank to give orders and have dominion or (supreme) authority over those who may unavoidably be dependent in some ways. Power is then an achievement of one's goals, whether one consciously or unconsciously carries others along and anybody can exercise power at any given time.

Women have their forms of power which may or may not be different from the conventional powers of politics, economics and culture. This type of power is what Chinweizu (1990:19) groups into bride, wife and mother powers which are supreme because they revolve round the womb which controls other human powers. To him, women exercise

these powers “through determination, compulsion and control through the means of directives, suggestions, propaganda, persuasion and coercion coupled with collusion” (19). Adams (1999:6) avers that “masculinity itself cannot be fully understood unless female masculinity is taken into account”. It could be observed that contemporary women take part unreservedly in professions hitherto considered exclusively reserved for men. Equally, the issue of tagging ‘Mrs.’ to a married female’s name is obsolescent, as women now use ‘Ms’, thereby discarding old forms of Mrs. after their names (Ibitokun, 1995:118).

In as much as most people will readily acknowledge the fact that masculinity, as a concept, has become a favoured discourse during the last decades of the twentieth century, its representations where women are concerned would be questionable despite the open manifestations and confessions regarding the possibility. These open confessions even by those women who possess natural masculine attributes and have been so identified are further inspired through diverse approaches of gender and sexuality theory. Towards the end of the decade, more thorough variety of approaches such as “men’s studies”, “sociology of masculinities” and a “pro-feminist perspective on masculinity” emerged to address the issue more extensively than gender studies had done (Whitehead, 2002:39). It was the bulk of studies on men that led to the quest to explore and challenge the limits of gender duality in individual’s life. Whitehead (2002:39) opines, that the foregoing eventually brought about the knowledge of the new and more radical politics, which allowed for the concept of transgender; the development of new identities of gender benders or gender blenders leading to female-male or female masculinity. It is this concept of transgenderism that led to different kinds of corporeal expressions of masculinity by genetically female persons (Wickman, 2003:41). Rise in public expression of female masculinity, through female bodies, increased the importance of the phenomenon and allowed for more inspiration and opportunities for people who felt inclined to know more.

Halberstam (1998:232) claims that female masculinity is not merely a mimicry of male masculinity in that it has its own specific gender with its own cultural history rather than derivatives from the male specie. According to her, this means that there are some women who possess natural masculine attributes within the society, and have been so identified. For instance, some of these female-identified-males are also classed as gays,

lesbians, bi-sexuals or transgenderists, while others are labelled as the stone butches, the gender queers, the gender fuckers and the drag kings. It has been argued by Butler (1990:viii) and other theorists that “female masculinity” is as real – or as unreal – as “male masculinity.” Indeed, Butler (1990:viii) sets out to oppose “those regimes of truth that stipulated that certain kinds of gendered expression were ... false or derivative, and others, true and original”. He succeeds in this aim, constructing a provocative theory of gender as performativity, in terms of which one may perceive all gender performances as equally authentic or inauthentic. In other words, a male who performs masculinity, or who assumes a masculine position in society, is no more “authentically masculine” than a female who performs masculinity.

Goodwill (2009:26) observes that female masculinity is becoming more and more evident in social life as well as in literary representations, and that it is being perceived by different people in different ways. Some of these classifications of female masculinity as Goodwill (2009:26) mentions are: the Stone Butch- for ‘performativity’, the gender queers- sex/gender difference; the gender fuckers- who deliberately flounce the natural social order, The drag kings are merely performative in nature and the transgenders modify their physical gender assignments. In other words, the history of female masculinity is vast and lengthy within the society especially, in the Western world and within the lesbian culture. Howbeit, this study aims to basically examine that inherent maleness in individual females, that which is called the ‘wild woman archetype’, ‘the powerful psychological nature’ or the ‘instinctive nature of women’ (Estes 1997:7). It is quite different from the various forms of female masculinity perceived and analysed above as it concerns what a woman does and how, in her female-bodied nature. Estes (1997:7) also calls it ‘the natural psyche’ or the innate or ‘the basic nature of women which are indigenous and fundamental in nature’. These are the inherent traits which women have been naturally endowed with as well as what they reassert their relationships through. According to Estes (1997:9), this female masculinity which is also called “the wild woman nature”:



is not a religion but a practice. It is psychology in its truest sense; it is that which deals with the knowing of the soul. Without this wild woman nature, the women's inner eyes are closed by some shadowy hand while large parts of their days are spent in a semi-paralysing ennui because such trait is their regulator. When one loses touch with the instinctive psyche, powers that are naturally exhibited by the females, especially are denied hence are not allowed full development. Without her, women's psychology makes no sense. This wild woman is the prototypical woman, no matter what culture, no matter what era, no matter what politics, she does not change.

This 'in thing' in every woman propels her to exhibit that masculine trait, irrespective of situations, time and place: even if she is suppressed, she struggles upward. No matter how many times she is forbidden and quelled, "she emanates upward so that even the most repressed woman has a secret life, with secret thoughts and feelings which are lush, wild and natural" (Estes, 1997: 11). In other words, anyone who is close to an average woman, may not know that he or she is in the presence of two women; the woman of the physical being - and the one of an inner, the spiritual, innate or inborn creature. She further submits that an average woman is 'made up of one of inner mind who lives by the light of day and can easily be assessed'. The other mind is the one who lives a life not easily discernible, but often she travels far away into hiding. She further agrees that this is necessary, because if a woman hides a side and favours the other, she would be deprived of her access to her needful power, especially, where men are concerned. By implication, when both sides of 'the dual nature' of the females are held close together consciously, they have tremendous power over any subject before them. Estes (1997:15) strongly opines that "with this nature of the psychic duality of an average woman's personality, women can achieve anything anytime from anybody".

From the above, it is glaring that a woman, no matter the culture, the age or era or situation, does not change her cycles: masculine or feminine representations, but in essence, she is what she is and what she wishes to be. As Estes (1997:35) further observes:

Her psychic advice is sometimes harsh or difficult to put into practice, but always transformative and restorative. She lives out there, half in, half out of the creative fire. She lives in and through us.

It is, therefore, necessary to enquire further on the forms and manifestations contained in these transformative and restorative roles that are inherent in the masculine traits of the females.

## 2.7 Forms and features of female masculinity

The term “female masculinity”, has brought different kinds of research findings into recent contemporary gender theory and practice everywhere. Masculinity could be directly attributable to men or women patriarchs or matriarchs, male superiority or male supremacy or female supremacy. Onwuka (2007:5) claims that “social construction of masculinity or femininity and the ideology of gender relations peculiar to any culture act as strong moderators of human”. This is so because, according to her, it is the society that maps out roles for each gender, irrespective of the sex differences.

However, some scholars have argued that masculinity should not be a matter of categorisation but that of discourse that cuts across gender. They further see it as attributes of men as well as womenfolk (Ibitokun1995, Halberstam1998, and Ogundipe 2002). Ibitokun (1995:119) adds that:

for many young women, Jeans and trousers have replaced the traditional skirts and blouses. The flat breast culture is now in vogue among young females. Thus the human frontage, which ever before now has been one of the obvious nature’s ways of gender differentiation, is now being tampered with.

Therefore, the phenomenon where both male and female now compete in masculine exercise in terms of appearance and gait becomes increasingly alarming as well as acceptable. Ibitokun (1995:119) asserts that the professional, vestimentary and gestural imitations of men by women are indices of women’s liberation and emancipation. And more importantly, they are evidence of female “assertion of will” and a form of female masculinity. This type of assertion of will becomes an impulse which nothing can repress and before which all other powers bow.

According to Reeves (2003:43), masculinity is a case of male supremacy, an overall power and full dominance inherent in human relations which otherwise allows for a universal subordination of the female. Female masculinity is becoming more and more

evident in social life as well as in literary representations. Moreover, it is expressed in many different ways. For instance, Halberstam (1998:2) posits that female masculinity has been frequently manifested in all societies and that what we understand as female masculinity has been produced by and across both male and female bodies. Adams (1998:6) equally notes that female masculinity has played a crucial but unrecognised role in the emergence of contemporary formations of gender theory in that it has been an expression of ‘self’ in all actions through which the desired goals for the transformation of lives and situations are achieved.

## **2.8 Types of female masculinity clues exhibited**

### **2.8.1 Dress code clues**

In the history of fashion and costumes, there is always a reason why cloth is worn. Women in particular have long recognised the significance of clothing, as they are usually seen in the streets wearing extravagant dresses (Okeh, 2009:14). Usually, women adopt styles of dresses that express their particular distinct identity. It is observed that in making clothing choices, women are demonstrating awareness that a style or mode of appearance has meaning (Odeleye, 2000:12). In the same manner, another researcher also corroborates this by asserting that clothing, in any culture, is a means of communication (Rowland-Warne, 1992:38).

This assertion points to the fact that clothing conveys messages when members of a society who share a given culture have learned to associate types of clothing with a given customary usage. According to Preves (2003:120), gendered dress refers to those additions or modifications put on the body, which have attributes of femininity and masculinity. Dress is a non-verbal mode which communicates gender issues. Preves (2003:123) further postulates that dress can be used to define culture since it communicates, affiliates and demonstrates values, attitude, beliefs and norms.

Attitudes towards dress are important and should be studied because they greatly influence one’s choice of dress. There are many reasons why people dress nowadays, as well as in the Renaissance age. In the latter era, women especially, dressed as willed as Gorman (2006:3) opines that it has long been the fashion, especially on the Elizabethan stage for Shakespeare and contemporaries to assign staged cross-dressing a visible place

within the known patriarchal world. To him, “some specific instances of cross-dressing are interpreted as transgressive or as reaffirming patriarchal power, and are inevitably defined only in relation to the patriarchy”. Furthermore, Howard (1992:10) echoes that staged cross-dressing *either* ultimately reasserted the patriarchal construction of gender *or* it created an arena for anxious questioning of real gender boundaries. The inherent assumption here is that to discuss staged cross-dressing is always primarily to discuss patriarchal notions of gender. This implies that cross-dressing on the Elizabethan stage was, and is, fundamentally and necessarily about women. In other words, “cross-dressing represents a form of transgression so intrinsically uncomfortable that it must be resolved.” Sources In contemporary Nigeria, the younger generations’ way of dressing is a total departure from the past. As Okeh (2009:14) opines,

they dress weirdly and embarrassingly. The female younger population mostly dresses half nude; they prefer to wear trousers and skimpy skirts or tee-shirts that reveal their tummy, body hug which shows all the contours in their body frames or mini-skirt with a see-through tops.

This observed dressing code is not limited to a specific class of younger population. It cuts across the entire socio-economic status, irrespective of their educational level and land status (Odeleye, 2000:63). This has been going on for quite some time, therefore ‘what used to be regarded as fashion, which is described to be a period’s desired appearance, according to Okeh (2009:14), is being turned to clothing which is regarded as an established pattern of dressing’.

However, a look at what is obtainable in the Renaissance age is mostly referred to as cross-dressing. A cross-dresser is someone who wears clothing commonly associated with the other sex (in his or her culture). Cross-dressers are also known as transvestites - women that desire to dress in men’s clothings. For instance, a woman who wears a classically “male” coat and tie would be cross-dressing. All types of cross-dressers can possibly not be described in a few short sentences. Most cross-dressers discard their clothes when threatened or discovered, but almost always end up getting them back after a while. Some dress as fully complete with name and male persona and others use it as a means of sexual satisfaction. According to Gorman (2006:7)

cross-dressers are those who dress for erotic reasons, those that like the feel of male clothing, and those who wish to go out dressed as a man just like one of the boys. They are regular women when they are not dressing up and they do not desire to be a man full time.

Dressing up is purely an expression of their masculine sides. Most of them are ordinary women who have discovered a masculine aspect to their personalities and desire to transcend the narrow stereotypes mandated by conventional society. In fact, cross-dressing is not the same as being transsexual or identifying with being born into the wrong body. For the majority of cross-dressers, their masculine feelings and expressions are limited to putting on clothes, fashion, make-up, and wigs. Primmer (1994:56) states that:

cross-dressed heroine presents both an examination of femininity and women's power which is also an examination of homosexuality and effeminacy which engaged the twentieth-century feminists' concentrations, and that of the contemporary audience much more directly.

She adds, while making a case on Portia, that it is a paradox that Portia is the most successful cross-dresser because she confidently achieves her goals through that supposedly typically female skill-argument. It is an ability that is evident within the walls of Belmont, but which Portia only exhibits without them when she is dressed as Balthasar. So, characters who cross-dress apparently gain greater power to exhibit masculinity in them merely by changing their dress within the Shakespearean canon.

#### **2.8.1.1 Purposes for cross-dressing**

There is considerable diversity in women's motivations for cross-dressing. For many decades, there have been genetically female-male impersonators for whom wearing of men's clothing has been part of their stage acts. Cross-dressing is part of their trademark as stage performers. These groups of people are known as "drag queens" who dance, sing and otherwise perform for the entertainment of clubs' customers. There might be some degree of mixed motivations for performing in drag, but the primary motivation is economic: they make their living as performers. They do not cross-dress outside of their employment settings. This type of cross-dressers are a very small, but quite visible, portion of the cross-

dressing population. Because a drag queen's cross-dressing is not taken seriously as he or she may be laughed at or be applauded at the end of the performance.

The largest portion of the cross-dressing population are transgender persons in the strictest sense: persons who cross-dress to express other-gender feelings. Their primary gender identity usually is male and they spend most of their time in their masculine roles; but they also have a feminine component to their personalities. Viola finds comfort in expressing her masculine feelings by dressing as a man. They wish to express both their male and female sides, although their cross-dressing is usually limited to a few times. It is estimated that over half of transgender persons of this kind are married. Their neighbors, coworkers, and others in their everyday lives may be completely unaware of their cross-dressing. Another reason for cross-dressing is the desire to express something about oneself via grooming, hair, clothing and related accessories. This reason is the primary one among almost all part-time cross-dressers who take the time and trouble to dress fully enough that they could present themselves as women in public: and it also includes virtually all transsexuals. Whatever the relative strengths of a person's masculine and feminine feelings, however, if some express a gender identity that differs from their genetic sex, then this may be troubling to some men of their time.

### 2.8.2 Voiced act clues

Conversational clues are most effective in *Romeo and Juliet* where the undeniable impact of Juliet's masculinity on Romeo is shown. Although this aspect is shown through soliloquies in most cases. Soliloquy is a means of talking to oneself when nobody is at least consciously present to hear it.

Soliloquies are frequently used at special moments in a play or when 'a character is undergoing some kind of emotionally or psychologically heightened experience' (Croft and Cross,1998:45). For example, Soliloquies are used when a character is distressed or suffering some kind of confusion of mind or alternatively when a character is feeling exultant or wants to work through their own thoughts and feelings. Although technically speaking, such characters are thought of being alone on the stage, or at least out of earshot of other characters when they deliver their soliloquy, a soliloquy-like effect can be created

in other ways. Sometimes a character may be in the presence of others but they are so wrapped up in their own world that it is as though they are talking to themselves.

An **'aside'** is an extremely useful device by which characters can give hints concerning their innermost feelings to the audience. Through soliloquy, a character's thoughts and feelings can be much more developed and vocalised, allowing the audience to see into the mind of the character. Soliloquy is an expanded and more fully-developed speech and is usually delivered when the character is alone on the stage. Oftentimes 'soliloquies allow characters to reveal their true feelings, plans, or motives as they do not need to maintain any public image that they may project in front of the other characters' (Croft and Cross,1998:46). Asides and soliloquies are used especially, in Shakespearean drama to create lasting effects in a speech where the character reveals his/her innermost thought secretly but openly, in Shakespearean plays. These two and others such as mannerisms, prophecies and persuasions are efficiently used by all the protagonists to achieve whatever they wanted.

### 2.8.3 Assertiveness clues

An assertive tendency is the power of action that is shown within a play as female characters may exhibit any power of action without necessarily altering their status quo. Fiske (2000:623) sees such exceptions as "heroic exceptions to the more general rule of depressing male domination". Masculinity needs not be limited by social expectations of appropriate behaviour for either of the sexes.

Generally, female characters possess power, use power, and are seen to be powerful usually through words and actions. However, the potency of their words, dress and actions are all affected by expectations of their (feminine) gender. Sometimes, witty women speak out in affirmative manner or context through a highly-charged medium which has naturally been ascribed to men. Primmer (2003:313) posits that each society has embodied within it gender-related expectations of appropriate behaviour for men and women, which even the most assertive woman cannot overcome. In most cases, it is the men's weaknesses that create spaces in which female characters have the opportunity to act with unusual assertiveness. The creation of such spaces, according to Primmer (2003:313), confirms the fact that gender is a social construct, which has not benefitted all individuals, of both sexes,

whom it affects. Therefore, in all genres of literature, especially comedy, men and women achieve some version of equality which gives them an indepth love, even in their fleeting moment. Hence, female characters are most often seen as powerful in the context of romantic love, where also they are fated either to happy silence or guiltless death.

An assertive person is usually a self-advocating individual with a behavioural attribute associated with high negative masculine and low positive feminine characterisations. According to Lax and Sebenius (2006: 102), 'an assertive person is one whose negotiation style is overtly focused on claiming value, bargaining competitively, and with an aggressive pursuit of one's interests (as opposed to a more cooperative, problem-solving, value-creating approach' An assertive negotiator is, therefore, characterised as more aggressive and dominant (negative masculine traits) as well as more independent and ambitious. An assertive negotiator has a dominant or forceful orientation, a kind of high concern for self. According to Amanatullah and Tinsley (2012:2), the assertive style condition uses adjectives such as "insulting" and "unreasonable" in response to the other person being addressed. Women display assertive tendencies by being persuasive and persistent in a subtle, respectful and confident manner. An average assertive woman does this with a smile, with self confidence and an assured posture. Sometimes, an assertive woman tends to be forceful and forward at discharging her knowledge. In so doing, she is taken to be tough and aggressive and perhaps referred to something that rhymes with witch.

An assertive woman will naturally give an order with a smile. This will enable the one being ruled to be apt to do whatever is being asked without feeling the forcefulness behind the act. Such an assertive person will be steadfast with her points and being goal oriented as well as equally honest, sincere and confident with the point or fact she is delivering or selling out. She is also firm at resenting those who oppose her ideal while more than ready to stand by such decision any moment of the day. According to Kaufman (1997:89) if you are found in a situation where you need to be assertive you do so with a smile on your face. She further orientates that when one has a smile and is assertive, people will not think that one is being forward or forceful with whatever one is being asked to do.



#### 2.8.4 **Body language clues**

Social interactions between humans require numerous forms of verbal and non-verbal communication. Non-verbal communication, the exchange of information and meaning, in most cases, are needful in the facial expressions, gestures and movement of the body in a world of romance, especially, between a man and woman. These non-verbal cues are referred to as body language. Body language is not a true language or an equivalent for words and sentences; yet, its expressions can be understood instantly. Body language, be it in form of facial movement gestures or turn-out postures and other wordless signs, can be used to express a person's emotions, one's innermost feelings and attitudes. Body language communicates unspoken information about people's identity, relationships as well as moods, motivation, and attitudes. Body language, according to Beier (2004: 132), conveys shades of meanings that words alone cannot express. It takes many forms, such as facial expressions, eye contact, posture as in gait, hand gestures and para-linguistic cues as rapidity and coldness or slowness of speech and stressing of certain words to attract attention. Ornamentations, aesthetics attributes and flirtatious look also are part of the body language cues that can be used to attract an opposite sex to self for ulterior intentions. Body language often reveals aspects of a person's character that he may wish to hide. For example, a woman may try to convey an image of sincerity by speaking slowly, with much eye contact and an ingratiating smile, but face, posture, and gestures may reveal an underlying unconfused manipulative personality (Beier, 2004: 131).

There are other means by which one can express one's feelings and has diverse impacts on recipients. Wood (1994:53) reveals the fact that women can communicate messages in a more forceful manner than if spoken. Apart from a powerful woman showing bodily movement to communicate her intention, she could as well make use of other means such as posture, eye contact, facial expressions or bodily gestures rather than verbal discussions. Wood (1994:53) posits further that "women are better at expressing themselves nonverbally and appear to be more at home in carrying out their powerful and domineering messages". Women could also exhibit a greater variety of facial expressions, especially smiling and engaging in closer eye contact and intense, fixing gazes on the prey to give in depth, more meaningful and sexual but trapping demeanour ( Lindsay, 2003:52). Tannen (2001: 129) posits that women engage in eye contact than men and that in an opposite

gender conversational part, women will look at the other person more and retain longer eye contact. Short eye contact can be an indication that the gazer (a woman) is showing (superior skills) her assertive skills with the assumption that strength rather than meekness or weakness is being communicated. Masculine women may capitalize on nonverbal behaviour and use such to gain a measured prestige that entraps the opposite sex without much stress. Giddens *et al* (2012:118) affirms that “ Like facial expressions, gestures and bodily postures are used to fill out utterances as well as to convey meaning when nothing is actually said”.

Another aspect of body language is interpersonal attraction, a kind of non-specific positive response towards another person. Attraction ranges from mild liking to strong love. A strong determinant of one’s attraction to others especially, a woman to a man can be highly intimidating so that an average woman is culturally hindered to show strong love to the opposite sex. A strong female with equal traits captivates or casts an attractive spell on a man she loves at first sight by luring him to submissiveness. Andersen and Taylor (2009:108) opine that the attractions one feels toward people of either gender are based on one’s perception of the physical attractiveness. In the same vein, Tannenbaum (2001) cited in Andersen and Taylor (2009:108) is of the opinion that “beauty is only skin deep” and the more attractive one is, the more likely one will be asked out on a date. All the above variables are body language clues in the study.

## **2.9 Instances of female masculinity and governance in the indigenous Nigerian society**

In Nigerian society, there has been one event after the other which involved the womenfolk. In the past, the task of putting together women’s roles and history was difficult. But in the last few years, researchers, as well as local publishers, have done a lot of work on the roles and contributions of women in the development of their society.

Research provides concrete examples of the ability of the concept, gender, to go beyond biological sex, as presumed by Western scholars (led by Butler 1990, 1993). Research findings in Africa, especially in Nigeria, show that in specific circumstances “masculinity without men” (Halberstam 1998) can be ordinary and part of accepted gender experiences as in the institution of the “female husband” among the Nandi people in Kenya

(Oboler, 1980), in Igbo and Ekiti societies of Nigeria (Amadiume 1987, Achebe 2000 and Ghaill 2003) all cited in (Lindsay and Miescher, 2003:54). “Female masculinity,” means women’s attainment of positions or characteristics usually regarded as the preserve of men, like those of the women chiefs in Ekiti State, who acted as “honorary men”. In the Igbo “dual sex/flexible gender” system, female and male political/economic hierarchies existed in parallel (Amadiume (1987) in (Lindsay and Miescher, 2003:53). It also means the ability of giving a woman to ‘jump’ to the male ladder by paying bridewealth and thus gaining access to a wife or by being designated as ‘male’ for the purposes of inheritance, meant that individuals could change their genders in certain context (Haywood and Ghaill, 2003:5).

The fact that men could exhibit female traits is inferred in historical incidents of African forms of (male) homosexualities, which indicate that men could embrace and embody qualities associated with femininity, as with young male “wives” as well as with the yan daudu in relation to their male sexual partners in present-day Hausaland of Nigeria (Gaudio 1998 cited in Haywood and Ghaill, 2003:5).

However, the last two decades have witnessed, at least, a new era in the roles of women in the society. A chronicle of such researches is given at ‘the United Nation Decade for all Women’, by Kamine Okonjo, Cheryl Johnson, and Bolanle Awe (Awe, 1992:19). A critical examination of the female masculine roles in various forms in the Nigerian context has become urgent, as this would unearth the important roles of the womenfolk and their contributions to date. Awe (1992:32) rightly submits:

most African oral traditions, all the surviving religious cults and extranet political institutions, attest to the significant positions which the women folk occupied in social, economic, and political evolution of African communities.

She adds that ‘the roles played by these women were not merely passive and supportive, as some scholars opine, but dynamic and constructive’. Furthermore, the leading female figures of the pre-twentieth century Africa show that there were more women than men in the forefront of social, political and economic life. And the dominant positions which women held were both quantitative and qualitative (Awe, 1992: 32).

Nigerian society should provide a good starting point for this investigation of women’s situation as regards female power in the past. This is so because Nigerian society

is rich in women of outstanding courage, power and determination. Nigeria can boast of richness in oral tradition and custom as well as notable lifestyles of the people within the last one and a half centuries, especially the womenfolk. Also, all available records give ample evidence of a female population that has been resourceful, industrious as well as demonstrative of significant and distinguished leadership within the society. These records include women warriors of Aba in Eastern Nigeria and the energetic women farmers from the same part of the country. The continued existence of women chiefs in the then traditional councils, as well as priestesses in the cults, testifies to female contributions to the political and social spheres of life in both the western and southern parts of Nigeria (Obi, 2001:3).

The above facts prove that from the history of Nigerian people, there have been women of note who made their marks on their different societies. Even the history of our great nation already documented confirms how women of outstanding courage and determination have contributed immensely to national development. Such women include: Queen Amina of Zaria, Emotan of Benin, and Madam Tinubu of Lagos. Others are late Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti of Egbaland, Margaret Ekpo and Hajiya Gambo Sawaba (Obi, 2001:4). During the era of the above-mentioned personalities, that is, during the Nigerian pre-colonial days, the society was egalitarian and both sexes were equally needed to build the nation. This was confirmed from the fact that the then Nigerian women were powerful in the economic, social and political sectors of the pre-colonial and colonial eras. It was revealed also that women accumulated fabulous riches from genuine commerce and slave trade and also ruled vast kingdoms, not minding their status. It is also a common social and political belief among the Yorubas that whatever is not blessed by a woman will not succeed. As if to confirm this, Ogundipe (2007:28) notes that “as a woman is sacred in endogenous thought, her body is also sacred. Her body and parts of her body can be and are used as blessings, and curses, for power - social, material and supernatural...”.

Uku (1991:26) gives a catalogue of some prominent women, such as Madam Tinubu of Lagos, who conspired to kill the British consul and led a crusade against the monopolistic dealings of the Brazilian traders of her time. There was the case of the oldest daughter of Oba Ovoramwen of Benin kingdom who became rich in slave trade and political matters, and also Queen Daura of Daura Emirate in the North who happened to be one of the earliest

women who held political sway over men of her time. Some militant womenfolk also wielded considerable influence and authority at one time or the other during their own time. Notable among them were Efunsetan Aniwura, the Iyalode of Ibadan, who had her jurisdiction over all the women of her time. She also represented women's interests in the King's Council; an institution that was otherwise dominated by men. This masculinity in Efunsetan Aniwura became recognised as she later emerged as the most outstanding personality in her compound and was conferred with the rare title of Mogaji of that compound (Akorede, 2005:64). This was a rare honour as it was a position that was usually reserved for a man of outstanding status and with an exceptional leadership trait in the society. It was noted by Akorede, (2005:64) that this strong woman became 'the spokesperson for all women and a type of Queen who, like the male head of the then Ibadan town, had her lieutenants'.

Many of these women lived during the periods when history was fairly documented. Others were virtually 'legendary characters who existed in the dim recesses of Nigerian history', among who were Moremi of Ile Ife, Inkpi of Igala in Benue/Niger confluence and others. And on this, Evwierhoma (2002:3) opines:

Even though, it cannot be wholly denied that the African society as a whole has for long been dominated by man and male oriented precepts like patriarchy and masculinism, yet Africa has had a few brave women, who undaunted by their respective confirming circumstances, fought for the liberation of their peoples against the forces of extinction.

Women, like the above, are exceptional species, as they have managed to forestall patriarchal ideas. Eywierhoma (2002:3) gives a list of such women to include: Mme Kathilili of Kenya, Yaa Asantewa of Ghana and a host of others not fully represented in history. Apart from what history could tell, females have thrown their weight at every facet of life as Olasupo (2010:43) affirms: "Women could do every other thing that men do...the female gender could produce better results, even, as monarchs than men."

### 2.9.1 Female masculinity in economic and agricultural ventures in contemporary in Nigeria

The vast contributions of womenfolk in the development process call for discussion. According to Townsend (1999:36), women constitute a majority of the world's population and one out of three households in the world has a woman as its breadwinner. This source further asserts that many households depend on or find succour in women. It is further submitted that "for every woman living in poverty, there are four hungry children and that the size of a mother's income has a direct bearing on the nutritional status of her children" (Townsend, 1999:36). These imply that the role of women in the economy of any given country, most especially, the developing ones, and Nigeria in particular, cannot be overstressed.

In the agricultural world, women have traditionally been the 'invisible work force, the unacknowledged backbone of the family and the national economy' (CDR Report 1999:45). This report further asserts that women not only perform heavier, physical work, but they also work relatively longer hours than men. Modern women also participate in developing the rural sectors, especially where health and education are concerned. Nigerian women too have their share in the labour force as their roles, which are diverse, are summarised in Ihimodu (1996:15) thus:

The women folk actually participate in planting, weeding, processing and marketing, most harvesting is done by them, and women spend between six and eight hours on the farm daily, dividing these between their (own) farms and their husbands. While women generally grow food crops, men are engaged in commercial crops.

He hints further that the Yoruba women of the western Nigeria specialise in trading, the Igbo women of eastern Nigeria are active farmers, while the Hausa-Fulani women of northern Nigeria participate in farming activities, using crude farm implements too. Nigerian women play a major role in agricultural ventures such as production, preservation and commercialization of products to generate income. Women equally participate in other areas of life too, and in most cases, even more than the men.

### 2.9.2 Female masculinity in the business industry and the media

The past two decades have witnessed an increase in the number of women occupying positions of leadership in the business industry and more importantly, the media. The leadership of the media generally has been in the hands of men, as it follows logically that the majority of those who are in the news are men. Yet, there are few Nigerian female masculinists who can be counted as ‘movers and shakers of the media world’. Among such is Doyin Abiola who remains a pacesetter and a one time editor of the *National Concord*. There is also Mrs Amma Ogan whose credible presence as the editor of *the Guardian* on Sunday is widely felt and of course, Hadjia Bilikisu Yusuf, editor of New Nigerian Newspaper (Yusuf, 1991:61). There are also some women in positions of leadership in the area of business. To this effect, we have some few female Chief Executive Officers of financial institutions, such as ICAN, female ministers of various parastatals and other corporate bodies. To some extent, these women in power have contributed to increased women representations in society (Yusuf, 1991:61).

For some decades, there had been persistent gender stereotypes and attitudes which limit women’s access to leadership and performance and had equally determined their experiences as leaders. Naturally, there have been peculiar attributes and traditional definitions of leadership that are already assigned or attached to menfolk. This has been evident in the fact that whenever females display any vigorous or virile masculine leadership qualities, such are viewed as ‘behaving like men’ or being manly. This fact is further asserted in Udegbe (1998:10) that “a man, behaving like a woman may be repulsive to us, as a female leader who is exhibiting masculine traits tends to experience resistance and conflict from male and female group members”. Hence the phrase “that woman, is real man, oh” becomes a usual phrase any time a woman acts gallantly or fearlessly to accomplish anything.

In Nigeria, the commercial and political activities of the women reflect their level of independence. This could be seen from the fact that Uku (1996:30) opines that women occupied elevated positions before the advent of colonial great political influence during the colonial period. All together, the elevated position of Nigerian women got a boost with the introduction of western education and values in Nigeria.

## 2.10 Significance of comparative analysis to the study

Aransi (2005:62), while quoting the great French interpreter of American democracy, Alex de Tocqueville, supports the fact that “without comparisons to make, the mind does not know how to proceed.” To him, comparison is fundamental to all human thoughts. Aransi (2005) explains further on the view that “it is the methodological core of both the humanistic and scientific methods.” From the humanistic angle, he submits that ‘comparative analysis compares the experiences of the past and the present of any society with another, by making such experiences available to help widen the masses’ understanding of their own society’. A comparison is made also to examine policies, practices and beliefs of other societies with a view to assisting us to consider our own socio-cultural beliefs in a wider range. Adogbo (2003:14) informs that a comparative study is done to help people achieve an accurate and deeper understanding of one another and to equally find the best terms and concepts by means of which they could explain themselves to others. Comparative study also helps one to critically examine other people’s views in order to establish their general characters as expressions of human experience, with a view to relating such to contemporary views, particularly as they relate to the dynamics of social change.

The importance of comparative analysis in literature cannot be overstressed as Ademakinwa (2004:73) observes that it is among the most conscientious, objective and disinterested methodologies of investigation. Adogbo and Ojo (2003:16) reiterate the point made sometimes by Evans Pritchard, the best exponent of comparative analysis, that ‘if any general statements are to be made about any social institutions, such can only best be made by comparison between the same types of institution in a wide range of societies’. They explain further that the emphasis in comparison should be placed on differences rather than similarities and also ‘that institution must be similar in some instances before their differences could be identified’. It is suggested further that ‘comparison has the best chances of success in circumstances where societies have much in common structurally, socially and culturally’.

From this submission, therefore, the whole world seems to be over stocked with information, while the human brain has not proportionately grown to contain this increase in literary output. Hence Ademakinwa (2004:75) further opines that a comparative study of



these documents across board is necessary quoting Loliee (1970) as “that each literary worker adds an echo, feeble though it may be, to the thousand resounding voices, which from a thousand different quarters blend in an indistinct murmur”.

In addition, the 21<sup>st</sup> century has been fraught with complex new changes from the medieval through classical Renaissance through restoration ages to the contemporary age. Everywhere, every age has been bedevilled with changes especially academic or literary works and the resultant effects of these changes have varied unshared experiences which need to be merged for wider experiences as an advantage of comparative studies.

Comparative analysis, therefore, becomes the tool with which the themes, elements, characteristics, historical experiences, which cut across and are common to all cultures, are identified. Comparative analysis helps to develop explanations and proffer meanings to some different combination of ideas and events found in literary styles, and ideas of different societies. Comparative analysis becomes a powerful tool as it enhances ones’ ability to define and understand any changes in the literary trends in any country, by offering concepts and reference points from a broader perspective. It further encourages and enables one to test one’s literary theories by confronting them with the experiences of many other institutions and settings (Aransi, 2005: 64).

Comparative literature has its own conventions or policies, which guide the comparators in his field of study. Aransi (2005: 64) is of the opinion that some of the earliest scholars in this area based their concepts on the comparability of literary works on the grounds of a common ‘spirit’ or attitude of life, which they felt are shown. Aransi (2005) posits further that some scholars feel that the concept of comparability, especially, of literary works should be based on common attitude of the writers to be compared. However, he argues that there is no absolute and final intellectualism in comparison. It only entails comparing and bearing in mind the points to be compared. This becomes so in that the interwoven nature of ideas in literary works have made it to be an uneasy task to assess the originality of ideas which belong to each of the writers being compared. This point is further buttressed by Adeleke (2007:36) that “writers tend to emulate popular culture that may likely enjoy the reception of the readers”. Arguing further, he says that “this phenomenon is what critics call parody of the existing or original work, which in most cases, results in inter-textuality which is a feature of postmodernism or globalization”.

This study also attempts to make an incursion into the biographical, historical and textual materials concerned, to be able to discern or determine the sphere in which William Shakespeare, Femi Osofisan and Zulu Sofola function or operate. This would be done at both local and wider levels, so as to determine the levels at which female masculinity is vastly shown in the writers' works. Though the entry of female writers into the creative enterprise, which has been a male preserve in Nigeria, has been slow and their creativity has a short lived-history, notable female playwrights called for our recognition. For such female writers, Adebayo (2010:19) describes their writings as those that "came tardily to literature for socio-cultural and not biological reasons", while the presence of male writers were already concertedly felt on the literary scene since the 1930s" according to Adebayo,

While appreciating such writers' efforts, it took and still takes extra efforts for the woman to write. As everyone that does must have killed the angel in the house. Prejudices in our societies where expectations for women are still very low. ( 19)

Some reasons for this tardiness of women to literary scene had been listed, among others, to include: excessive domestic responsibilities for the females, gender socialization and lukewarm attitude of publishers to female authored texts (Adebayo 2010:19). Apart from the above notions, the society has assigned the Beti proverb which says that women have no mouths (Okereke, 1998:157), and that silence as a female virtue is utilised to muffle the female voice in literature.

In spite of the above general perception of female writers in Nigeria, it is desirable that female playwrights bring onto the pages of their texts, active female characters, as silence is no longer a virtue for women. The female dramatist, as a member of the society, then, has the choice of portraying her heroine to suit her authorial goals. Evwierhoma (2002:2) opines that "the dramatist has also the prerogative of making her woman conform to the active and radical group or presenting her as docile and submissive".

As African male writers are divided into two categories, so also are the female writers. The first generation of female writers in Nigeria include those, whose works began shortly before the independence of 1960 and run through to the end of the civil war. The second generation of female writers comprises those who published their works after the war of 1970 to date (Evwierhoma, 2002:9). Their literary creativities span through all the

genres of literature (drama, prose and poetry). The first and second generations of these female writers from Nigeria include Mabel Segun, Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, Zulu Sofola, Stella Dia-Oyedepo, and Tess Onwueme. Ekwierhoma (2002) observes the fact that 'some writers like Mabel Segun, Zulu Sofola, Flora Nwapa and others span both generations, since their works appear in the first and second periods of literary creativity'. She contends further that writers of both categories demonstrate the needs to address definite female audiences in their various societies.

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE GENESIS OF ENGLISH RENAISSANCE AND CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN WRITERS AND THEIR WRITINGS**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter takes a look at the historical aspect of the study consisting of the beginning of literary drama in the English Renaissance and the contemporary Nigerian ages. The writers and their writings are considered.

#### **3.1 Genesis of gendered literary drama in the Renaissance era**

For more understanding of the place of women in the drama of the English Renaissance era and, generally in contemporary society, it is desirable to examine some of the dramatic activities of these two periods.

The Renaissance was an age which marked a useful chapter in the era of intellectual achievements. It was the melting pot of the dramas of all forms and ages (Adedokun, 2001:28). The English Renaissance drama is also often called Elizabethan theatre, as it covers only the plays or drama texts written and performed publicly in England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603). Because of this, Elizabethan theatre is distinguished from Jacobean theatre (which was basically associated with the reign of King James I (1603-1625), and the Caroline theatre associated with King Charles I (1625 until the closure of the theatres in 1642). In practice, however, 'Elizabethan theatre' is often used as a general term for all English drama from the Reformation age to the closure of the theatres in 1642, thus, including both Jacobean and Caroline drama. As such it can be synonymous with "English Renaissance drama" or "early modern English drama" (Wadsworth, 2004:302).

The English drama of the Renaissance period derived from several medieval theatre traditions, such as those of religious festivals based on biblical themes, and other sources as morality plays, and university drama which attempt to re-create Greek tragedy. Adedokun (2001:28) aptly captures it thus:

The English theatre of the Renaissance was the product of a confluence of diverse elements held in fruitful tensions. Elements, both popular and intellectual, (that are) inherited from the middle ages survived to play an important part in the outlook of the dramatists and in their understanding of their craft.

As Adedokun (2001) further observes, it is the era when everything pertaining to unique learning and knowledge was re-discovered as further recorded.

Everything has to be rediscovered. But it often proves well worth discovering, and the plays reveal in production more links than one might have supposed with what went before and what is to come after. Above all, the Renaissance period was unique in the fact that it was an era devoted to the full exploration of new areas of scholastic knowledge through thorough research. Hence it was christened a period of rebirth of learning (29).

During this era, theatrical knowledge, such as Aristotle's *Poetics* which gave rise to a renewed interest in dramatic concepts and criticism emerged. Also, there was the spread of more information and theatrical knowledge which gave birth to the Academic theatre known as 'Erndata' and the professional 'Commedia dell'arte' and even the elaborate Masques of the 17th century, which came to play vital roles in the shaping of public theatre of the period. The English Renaissance theatre was not much different from the theatre of the Middle Ages for some reasons. According to Allyn and Bacon (1989) cited in Adedokun (2001:29):

There were no great writers or great plays. Greek and Roman plays were only produced in Greek or Latin. In spite of its academic devotion, did not rediscover theatre or produce any play or writer of enduring influence.

However, since the Renaissance period includes the general umbrella name, which is the Elizabethan theatre as explained earlier on, the drama of this age became a more unified expression as far as social class was concerned. Elizabethan theatre became more oriented towards the tastes and values of an upper-class audience. The unique age too became as labelled as it was the period described as the melting pot of various dramatic forms and also the transition point between them and the modern theatre. It was a period when man occupied the stage with his fate in his hands (Adedokun 2001:29). Therefore, theatre

organisations took various forms. Drama productions became varied with the increasing population of the English drama fans in the city of London then. The social status of the people and their fondness for theatrical entertainment and spectacle, led to the emergency of some notable playwrights of this period and this equally gave rise to what became known as the English Drama of the Renaissance age.

### 3.2 The English drama in the Renaissance and the portrayal of women

The Renaissance literary works are based on biblical stories which are told in modified manners, with liberal and more civilized attitudes towards the females, than the ones which emerged in the Old and the New Testaments of the Bible. Initially, the Europeans' attitude to women was mostly fashioned after the biblical treatment of women, but such attitude seemed to have been towed along a completely different line of thought. This difference reflected in the ways both men and women began to do things together but only that men regarded the women as weaker species, while men, the stronger (Hudson, 1991:15). This opinion forms the basis for the low respect for and treatment of women in the era in question. The result of this was that a low view of womankind became widely used and noted among people of all social classes. Women were, from then, taken and believed to be deceitful, vain, extravagant, envious and lacking in discretion. In essence, through the ages of the classical era to the modern and contemporary Africa, diverse attitudes to female and of the female in literature, in particular, has remained a major concern.

As far back as the classical through the medieval times, the discrimination against the womenfolk and the general attitudes to them have been patriarchal. A lot of researches lend credence to this fact. Writers, like Homer (8th century BC) wrote *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad*, where women characters are portrayed as subordinate, devilish and untrustworthy. In fact, Homer represents, through his writings, the women-hating attitude. An example is shown in Homer's portraiture of Helen's infidelity as the cause of the Trojan war during her time (Evwierhoma, 2002:26). These writers regard the male as being supreme and having overall dominance over the female. In the realm of drama, this situation is different, in that in the classical Greek society women are presented on stage either as conservatives or radicals depending on each writer's vision. The popular writers during the era include

Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles and Aristophanes who held different views on females of their time. Aeschylus presents female as “incestuous and murderous”, while Sophocles portrays female characters as being either submissive as in *Oedipus Rex* or being masculine, as shown by the heroine in *Antigone* (Evwierhoma 2002:26). She opines that Euripides is known for his radical writings as he never allowed religion to dominate his plays but showed females extensively on stage and that Aristophanes too portrays women as dominant figures in his comedy, especially *Lysistrata* (Evwievhoma 2002:30). In this anti-war comedy according to Evwievhoma, women in the play, led by the heroine Lysistrata, use the weapon of sex to put an end to the imminent war and its catastrophic effects on their people.

The medieval and the Renaissance periods revealed an unequal discrimination against the female-folk. During these periods, male authority was almost total. Women were held responsible for the suffering of mankind, emanating from the Biblical account of the fall of Adam in the story of Genesis of the Holy Bible. Eve was made from Adam’s rib. And since she persuaded Adam to eat out of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, she was to be punished and forever to be placed under the control and domination of her husband. Hence, God pronounces in (Genesis 3:16):

I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bringforth children;and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

Most of the religious dramas of the Medieval and Renaissance periods were in the forms of mystery plays and morality drama of the time, based on the Holy Bible, the church liturgy, and the life of the saints as seen in *Everyman*. These plays were developed in the forms of ‘allegories’ and ‘cycles’. The concept of the fall of Eden took supremacy over the drama of this period. Hence, the clergy ran a never-ending campaign against women who were regarded and treated as ‘temptresses’ responsible for men’s wrong doings. The above submission results into what Hudson (1991:20) terms “a view of womankind among people of all social classes”.

In the Renaissance era, women were thought to be deceitful, vain, extravagant, envious and lacking in judgement or discretion. It was believed that the only way to keep women tamed was for men to give their wives enough rough treatment to frighten them into good behaviour. Hudson Weems (1976) cited in Charles 1991:30) supports the above point thus:

Although women went to church more regularly than men and were more active in their religious devotions... They spent far too much time and effort on their clothes... to make themselves attractive to men. Their elaborate head-dresses were particularly objectionable as they lure men.

If a husband should find his wife wearing such, he encourages him to:

Take courage, pluck up the headdress and tear it from her head, even though four or ten hairs should come away with it and cast it into the fire. It is fitting that the man should be the woman's lord and master.

The above submissions are general notion of the English Renaissance dramatic age about women. That was why women were not allowed to act on the English stage during the Renaissance era. Boys were made to act in place of women, such as Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*; Desdemona in *Othello*, Katerina in *Taming of the Shrewd* and Beatrice in *Much Ado about Nothing*. In some cases, older women's parts were also played by some gifted male actors (Jacobus, 1999:46). This notion could be termed spiritual in that the Elizabethans enjoyed plays based on moral. Most of Shakespeare's and his contemporaries' early plays were less moralistic than the popular morality plays of the Middle Ages (Charles, 1991:52). Moreover, because of the fact that drama was still in the hands of the churches up till the mid-seventeenth century, women were taken to be second-class citizens as regards stage management and performances, which was an echo of the fact that "Eve had brought sin into the world... it was fair to assume that all women were temptresses responsible for wrong doings" (Hudson 1991:15). However, despite the great role of the church in the medieval era, in relation to drama, it was widely believed that the medieval period discriminated against women. This becomes pronounced in doctrines and beliefs which suppressed and oppressed the womenfolk as Hudson(1991) informs:

A slave can have no power of determination, a woman but a weak one... The courage of the man consists in commanding, the woman's in obeying. The male is by nature superior to the female.

What later made the difference was the fact that the society began to feel the need for the education of the females, as Hudson (1991:15) further submits:



Early in the sixteenth century, exceptional families gave their daughters every opportunity to become proficient and well read in Latin and Greek, Queen Elizabeth herself was highly educated and there were learned ladies in other families as well.

Nevertheless, the Middle age and the Elizabethan era witnessed creativity and radical changes from women writers and others whose creativity output revealed a lot on women's contributions to knowledge. These writings show a lot of effective roles women play in the society.

The Renaissance era up till the Victorian age marked a rebirth and the growth of good things in learning. This era witnessed a period when renowned writers wrote extensively on female characters. Writers, like Thomas More, Petrarch, William Shakespeare and Thomas Kyd wrote several works which adorned the desks of scholars during these periods (Evwierhoma, 2002:62). It was during this time, also, that Shakespeare wrote on his popular female characters like Lady Macbeth, Cordelie, Portia, Gertrude and other heroines. Shakespeare and other colleagues of his had different positive opinions on women, very unlike the Roman writers of the previous periods. These positive views might have been as a result of the fact that women began to have educational and job opportunities which gave them a new outlook from the past opinions of their male counterparts. In the subsequent periods, between 16th and 17th centuries, women characters began to play prominent roles in drama more than before (Aughterson, 1995:30). They made more appearances in texts as their roles within such texts became more prominent during the course of performing their activities in various plays. During this time, some writers like Ben Jonson also featured female characters even though some of his female characters were portrayed as weaker vessels as he refuses to reason that a woman could be romantic in nature so as to be able to behave otherwise than being submissive as he portays Dame Pliant in *The Alchemist*. But generally, most writers of the 17th century wrote on strong female characters that even became more domineering in nature, as Lady Macbeth, than those who preceded them (Evwierhoma, 2002:63). It is, however, noted that writers of the periods mentioned were different from their precursors, in that their works were enriched with much stronger female characters and dominant attributes than those before them.

In the Elizabethan age, a woman performing on stage was taken to be an abominable act. Female characters used to make more appearances in plays as they took part in dominant roles in the texts. So, in Shakespeare's plays, some of the female characters were strong and were allowed to have their own ways, while some of his female heroines revealed how aggressive, persuasive and masculine female characters could be in the plays, as exemplified through Lady Macbeth, Portia, Viola and others. This confirms the idea that men and women are equal in principle and that conjugal and political powers are open to women as well (Evwierhoma, 2002:14). In line with the above fact, Macinnes (2002:41) avers:

Gender is not actually an existing identity to social characteristics of men or women. But, that, there are certain traits which tend to be stereotypically associated with men or women even though men or women do not all bear these traits. But they may often display traits commonly associated with the opposite gender.

He argues further that gender categorisation and discrimination is dying out with the help of capitalism and contraception. This being the case, therefore, females too have the ability to employ the two powers (conjugal and political) to their fullest advantage. During the Jacobean age, females were allowed to make their free choices and play strong and self-assertive parts. Although in some cases, female characters are portrayed as being weak, as in some works of writers, like Ben Jonson (1572-1637), Christopher Marlowe (1504-1593), and Shakespeare (1564-1616). The fact that some parts were played by women was made possible after the puritan reign in England, from 1649-1660, when Prince Charles was invited back from France to be king. This invitation began what was known as the Restoration Age. It was at the restoration era that a new generation of actors and actresses emerged, as women began to play their real parts as against the boys playing women's part in the previous periods.

### **3.3 Writers of the Renaissance drama**

Despite the fact that most of the plays written for the Elizabethan periods, Renaissance inclusive, have been lost, over 600 remain extant. The notable playwrights of the era were primarily self-made men from modest backgrounds. Some of them had their education at either Oxford or Cambridge Universities, whereas some of them never attended

either but were noted for their powerful writings (Dutton, 2002:104). Similarly, not all the playwrights fit into modern images of dramatists or intellectuals as we have in the modern time, as several of them were probably soldiers. Christopher Marlowe, for instance, was killed in an apparent tavern brawl, while Ben Jonson killed an actor in a duel defence. However, most of these renowned writers of the Renaissance drama who were great writers and geniuses of their time, equally came into limelight during the Elizabethan era, when “notable developments were brought into the drama. These outstanding developments came as a result of the cultural upheaval caused by the protestant’s Reformation of the 1530 in England” (Jacobus, 1999:48).

The Elizabethan period was thrilled by histories, comedies and tragedies of the best authors because it was a period when English literature flourished. The period also enjoyed plays that featured in most of the dramas of the early 1560s and 1600s. One peculiarity of these plays was that they were less ‘moralistic in nature’ (Dutton, 2002:104). They never intended to teach moral lessons. For most of the time, they were meant for relaxation, even though many useful lessons cropped up from such playwrights, like Shakespeare and his contemporaries. However, William Shakespeare’s works became the most outstanding and mostly remembered for giving poetic drama a distinguished position among the creative arts. Dasyuva (2004:66) describes Shakespeare as the greatest writer who ever lived as his works outdistanced his learned contemporaries in literary value that endured to date.

In essence, like all great movements known, the Renaissance was infinitely complex and variegated as every area of knowledge was touched by its effect. The Renaissance period, especially in Italy, featured comedies which were usually preoccupied with young men and their love affairs like in some works of Plato, Aristotle and Cicero. The period ushered in some great writers (playwrights) of the Elizabethan period who contributed immensely to drama and brought notable development into the dramaturgy of their era. The development of such productive period emanated from the excitement generated from the cultural upheaval caused by the protestant Reformation of the 1530s in England. This led to the arrival of “several geniuses of theatre,” like Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson and Thomas Kyd (Jacobus, 1999:50).

It was also the activities of the periods that gave birth to the period called Elizabethan. Elizabethan period then becomes “the melting pot, the harnessing medium of

the past, the present and the future worlds of dramatic forms, it also marks the transition point between them and the modern contemporary theatre” (Adedokun, 2001:128). In spite of its academic devotion, this period did not rediscover theatre or produce any play or artist of influence. Thus, before an attempt is made to engage in a comparative analysis of the selected texts, there is need to consider briefly, each of the writers’ backgrounds: social and academic, which are believed to have informed their skills, visions and accomplishments in the literary world.

### 3.3.1 Shakespeare – his ideology

It is necessary to look at the status of women in Shakespeare’s plays and possibly compare such status with the ways in which women of contemporary age react to female matters, especially where masculinity is concerned, now that the society no longer has regard for gender disparity. In times like this, one might reasonably expect that women would be portrayed as ‘able’ and ‘self-controlled’ masculinists. This is so because, from the 1990s up to date, more inventions have been made in favour of women than Shakespeare was able to indicate during his own era.

Most of Shakespeare’s women were tagged ‘unruly women’, ‘outlaws’ ‘the female wild’, ‘the other’, and so on. These are some of the provocative terms used by some scholars recently to refer to Shakespeare’s heroines. All the same, these series of names or appellations have helped us to take a fresh and deep look at his female characters while women’s position in our society is being re-evaluated. In some of his works, one could see that while conforming to contemporary attitudes of women, he circumventes them by creating resolute female characters with strong will.

Many writers, all over the globe, consider Shakespeare as the greatest writer who ever lived though he never had a college degree, unlike many of his contemporaries (Richmond, 2002:210). Although some critics view him to be a ‘country boy’ yet he outdistanced other writers and colleagues of his in the literary world. He wrote comedies, tragedies, histories, poems, stories and lots more which are unique and quite different from his contemporaries. Richmond (2002:210) states that Shakespeare got inspired by stories within and outside his immediate environment while writing his texts, especially his comedies, after having gone through brilliant transformation of ideas.

Richmond (2002:211) expresses her concurrence with the fact that Shakespeare was a brilliant writer who developed his characters as though they were real people. According to her, he seemed to understand humanity in a way that other playwrights of his day had no clue of. He, therefore, portrays women in his plays as real women – who are good, bad, old, young, strong, tough, weak, subservient, and of course everything that real women are or could be. She submits that all the women in Shakespeare's era are very strong but some of them have only been submerged by the socio-cultural situation where they have no alternative but to be submissive. Some sought to control the situation as best as they can. She adds that some of his women are successful while some are not, such as Lady Macbeth, Ophelia and Cleopatra who are great women.

Hoeverler (2007:15) is of the opinion that one cannot predict what a round character will do at all times, more so that Shakespeare's characters are written in that vein. He states further that Shakespeare is pretty fair towards the assertive women, at least in the comedies and some of the romances. In creating his comedies, real and unreal issues are touched as he creates real and unreal characters with unique roles. In some of his works, especially comedies, the subject of love becomes prominent and domineering. He uses some exciting features that make his work conform to the fact that genderhood means same in both sexes as similar features could be exhibited by both of them, at any point in time.

### **3.4 A brief perspective on the Nigerian contemporary dramatic literature and their playwrights**

The genesis of education in Africa and in particular, Nigeria, has been traced to have originated from the West through a subtle infiltration of religious activities in the land. Naturally, the traditional African society was predominantly religious as it was a world where man had an intense relationship with the gods. Hence, the dramatic activities in Africa in the past reflected the oral ways by which the African people related with their universe before the emergence of Western civilisation (Ebi, 2005:17). In other words, drama in Nigeria began as orature, a kind of verbal form of drama, before its encounter with actual formal education, as Dasyuva (2004:67) corroborates:

Some of these traditional activities like “dancing, drumming, chanting, singing and masquerading which have hitherto been employed in secular “festivals” and at social functions are purely for entertainment.

He maintains further that it is believed, that the secularisation of these specialised constituents of traditional rituals gave rise to dramatic activities such as the professionalised drama groups in Nigeria, in particular.

Initially, the written drama was solely meant for the colonial masters’ mode of entertainment, but written drama had no relevance to the Africans, especially, Nigerians who were then illiterate and only delighted in telling moonlight stories. But with time, as Ebi (2005:17) posits, Nigerians began to acquire education and the growth of literacy among them gradually produced a set of university graduates who started writing realistic drama for their people. It was this type of drama that is known as modern or literary drama which is directly linked with the emergence of the Nigerian elite (Ebi, 2005:19).

These Nigerian elites felt challenged to recreate the Nigerian situation suitable for representation on stage. These elites who had first been influenced by Western traditions through the European dramas already read, and adapted some of these for their people, hence the first crop of written drama in the society emerged. The growth and development of drama in Nigeria became prominent especially in the then Western and Eastern parts of the Country. And invariably written drama later flourished in Nigeria through the works of playwrights like Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi, J.P. Clark, Zulu Sofola, Ama Ata Aidoo, Tess Onwueme and Femi Osofisan (Ebi, 2005:24). Thus, as literary dramatic activities progressed in the western and eastern parts of Nigeria as it became glaring that Nigerian university graduates from these parts of the country form the largest number of modern playwrights in Nigeria. Thus, there is the need to bring the various dramatic activities of Nigerian dramatists and their dramas into a brief searchlight for more understanding of the growth and development of drama in Nigeria.

Nigerian playwrights, according to Obafemi (2001:159), have been categorised into “first or the second generations of writers both in chronology and in terms of dramatic vision-of”. This categorisation has not been done because of age but because of what became known as their artistic vision and practices. The first generation of writers include Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi, J. P Clark, whose visions are intertwined with cultural,

traditional and metaphysical paradigms: myths, rituals, mores with continuity and the issues of life and death

Howbeit, the retrogressive assessment of these first generation of playwrights by critics, especially that which claim that their task is to rouse the people from and not to join the general despair of the society, mar their artistic vision and practice. But the second set of playwrights came into existence during the post civil war period in Nigeria. According to Obafemi (2001:168),

Their works deals, urgently, with contemporary social problems in Nigeria with the aims of raising mass awareness of a positive revolutionary alternative to the present decadence, rejecting the idealist vision based on the animist-metaphysics of their pedecessors and their preferences for collectivism among the people

Prominent members among the young dramatists include Femi Osofisan, Bode Sowande, Olu Obafemi, Kole Omotosho, Tess Onwueme and Stella Oyedepo. The conscious ideological commitment of these later playwrights in Nigeria informs the significant point of departure between them and the first generation of dramatists in English in Nigeria represented by Soyinka and John Pepper Clark (Obafemi, 2001: 168). Similarly, Aliu (2006:08), declares that the second generation of dramatists' presiding ideological visions are positively skewed towards the socialist cause, believing that man's problems originate from man himself and not from any 'metaphysical realm or gods'. Therefore, only man can, by himself, find solutions to these problems. It is upon this premise that this new set of Playwrights reckon on drama as a relevant instrument for social mobilisation. For this group of writers, that is the socialists, drama is see as functional in terms of arousing the consciousness of the masses (in order) to effect a change for a better relationship in the society. In other words, the latter generation of playwrights views drama as a strong ideological weapon, which can be used to create an awareness that may lead to drastic changes in the society. Quoting Osofisan, Awodiya (1995:91) submits that

the works of these first generation of writers are guilty of creating an escapist literature, a literature which fails to address the reality of social system and grapple in meaningful ways with the solutions to the inherent problems prevalent in such societies.

He reiterates further that “myth and the mythic material should be reshaped and reconstructed in a way to expose the oppressive and exploitative tendencies inherent in their making”. This, to him, means that the mysteries hidden in the drama, which institutionalised rituals, should be demystified to allow for some diplomatic moves that would invariably allow for free interaction, liberation and expression among the people of all classes. For example, it is believed that drama, in all continents, originated from some sort of religious rituals and feasts of various people and societies. This point goes further to establish the fact that drama itself originated from the early Greek drama comprising of songs, dances, prayers and audience participation. It is believed that this Greek drama came out of the dramatic activities that were part of the religious festivals in honour of their gods, such as Dionysus (Ebi, 2005:4). It was from the songs and verse recitations coupled with solemn performances aimed at making peace with the gods at the times of harvest and pestilence called the dithyramb, an ode to Dionysus, which evolved into tragedy, which Thesis of Africa turned into drama of the sixteenth century B.C. It could be seen, therefore, that the first generation of writers of drama drew their dramatic inspirations from some mythical elements were ritualistic and sacred in nature. This set of writers seemes to present drama in a fearful and hostile nature that terrifies people. Though the plays of the second generation dramatists in Nigeria can be said to border on class-struggle whose weapons, to Aliu (2006:8) include:

Educating the naïve, underprivileged and oppressed in the society, where necessary. Undertaking some diplomatic moves, taking up arms in the struggle to liberate the society, as typified by the incidents in *Morountodun*, *Chattering and the song*; *Red is the Freedom Road*; and overhauling or conditioning of the mind of the folks along some ideological line.

It can be argued that one of these ideological lines could well be a strong advocate for equality of the sexes. That both sexes are equal in any form.

There is no doubt that modern Nigerian drama has been heavily influenced by European dramatic conventions. Virtually, all Nigerian playwrights have learned their crafts from the West and have, as well, adapted the acquired artistic skills to suit the African socio-cultural milieu. This is confirmed in the words of T. S. Elliot, cited in Nnolim (1997:117):



No writer is original... The Black writer of today owes as much to the European literary tradition as does his European counterpart. He is the product of two worlds – his African background, and the European intellectual historical and cultural experiences.

Aliu, (2006:15) corroborates this when he observes that,

The new generation of writers do not take kindly to the dramatic theatre which actually promotes the creation of illusory world, a theatre which tends to sedate the audience rather than simulate rational thinking but that which arouses a questioning doubt and radical consciousness.

It is this consciousness in the masses that brought about functionality in drama, where the oppressed women are injected with positive, progressive and revolutionary qualities to effect a change for a better gender relationship in the society. Hence, the exhibition of her unequal masculinity power, where and when necessary, as her male counterparts.

### 3.5 Nigerian contemporary plays and playwrights' perception of female characters

According to Ewrierhoma (2002:63), most of the plays by Nigerian playwrights show bias for strong characterisation in female. Yet, in some of Wole Soyinka's female characters, she notes that,

These first crop of dramatists have some imposing female characters, Cases could be found in Sidi and Iyaloja, two female characters with the minds of their own, possessing dignity as well as a strong desire to protect traditional values. These personages are found respectively in *The Lion and the Jewel* and *Death and the King's Horseman*.

She claims further that some women characters, like Amope in Soyinka's *The Trial of Brother Jero* and the women in *The Wives' Revolt* by J. P Clark are matriarchal, assertive, strong and supernatural.

However, the Nigerian civil war period of 1967 to 1970 witnessed the emergence of a new group of playwrights often referred to as the second-generation playwrights. This new set of writers gradually began to be dissatisfied with the artistic visions of the old generation of playwrights, which they believed and assumed to be pessimistic and

conservative in their belief about women and what they represent in the society. They are of the opinion that there should be an attempt made by these writers to bring out the deep humane elements in their female characters. They also opine that through the first generation of writers' literary writings, some renowned noble qualities of females ought to have been acknowledged along side their weaknesses, since humans comprise diverse traits. Nevertheless, the second generation of writers' drama incorporates these dual traits that are inherent in humans. Aliu (2006:1) buttresses the fact that this set of writers come to grip with the re-examination of social, economic as well as physical milieu which make an individual what he or she is – not minding the sex.

Their conscious ideological commitment becomes the significant point of departure between them and the first generation of writers ably represented by Wole Soyinka and John Pepper Clark. Commenting on the difference between the old and the new writers, Obafemi (1996:168) submits that the second generation writers' works deal, urgently, with contemporary social problems in Nigeria, with the aims of raising mass awareness of a positive revolutionary alternative to the present decadence. Prominent among the second generation of playwrights, as Obafemi also mentions, are Femi Osofisan, Kole Omotosho, Bode Sowande, Tess Onwueme and Stella Oyedepo. These writers display some interests in creating positive, healthy and assertive female characterisation despite all odds. This last generation of writers take delight in portraying and unveiling those inborn tendencies in a woman that are naturally revolutionary and affirmative. For example, in Osofisan's *Altine's Wrath*, a female heroine puts her affirmative role into action and regains her freedom of speech. Also, in *Morountodun*, a strong female masculinist takes a gallant stride to free the poor and oppressed masses.

There are other radical playwrights who realise the dominant roles women play, such as taking up arms of struggle, so as to liberate the society, as represented in the plays of Oyedepo, Onwueme, some of the later staged plays of Sofola, and other notable female writers. To sum up the worths of these playwrights, Aliu (2006:4) submits that "virtually, all the Nigerian playwrights; male and female have learned their crafts from the West and virtually all have adapted the acquired artistic skills to suit the African socio-cultural milieu". Such artistic skills lend credence to the African elite which felt challenged by the discriminatory and derogatory policies that indirectly aimed at oppressing the Africans.

Some of these African playwrights, therefore, try to correct the negative representation of the womenfolk by recreating their stories through dramatic literature, among other genres of literature.

So far, we have looked at how women could utilise their powers and assert their authority, right from the Graeco-Roman, Medieval, and the Renaissance eras. An attempt, though minimal, has also been made to examine some of the works of the 16th to 21st centuries playwrights and their attitudes towards the portrayal of female characters. Critical attempts would then be made to assess fully, the extent to which female protagonists in the plays selected for this study are portrayed in the course of manifesting their masculinities at different instances and at various levels.

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ANALYSIS OF FEMALE MASCULINITY VARIABLES IN WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S SELECTED TEXTS

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter investigates some attributes exhibited by some female protagonists in selected plays of Shakespeare and examines whether there are any integral link in the socio-cultural perceptions of gender identities as regards the success of all the selected playwrights' artistry. It focuses on dress code as clue to expressing female masculinity in the plays, examining transvestism and disguise variables. Attention is also given to voice act as expression of related masculine attributes, with the analysis of mannerisms, soliloquies, prophecies and persuasions as its variables. The chapter further examines assertiveness clue as means of exhibiting female masculinity in form of persistence, coercion, control and dominance variables. Additionally, the character considers body language as one of the clues to exhibiting masculine traits in form of gestures, aesthetics and flirtatious outlook in the selected plays. Here, issues of dressing, transvestism/cross-dressing, and disguise as the determinants of female masculinity are considered.

The clothes one chooses to wear and how one carries self are part of one's image to impress the person one hopes to attract. It is a known fact that clothes do attract and, especially if such style catches the eyes of the beholder, such a beholder is more likely to want to get to know the person better. It is, therefore, an open fact that different men have different tastes in women, which include the type of dresses they wear. In so doing, a woman could try dressing in a certain way to catch a man's attention by putting some extra efforts and thoughts into what she wears and how she dresses. She could dress in a conventional way or other ways just to attract the opposite sex. A cohesive and, at times, well-kept look are more likely to perform the needed magic no matter what the general style is. To accomplish this, women dress in diverse ways to express something different from the stereotypical roles ascribed to them in the society. They transvest/crossdress, disguise and even dress conventionally to oppress, intimidate, attract and for erotic purposes.

In one of her submissions, Edward (2004:471) declares that Shakespeare tries to go beyond the patriarchal social prejudices about the females of his era by portraying witty and high-spirited heroines in some of his plays such as *The Merchant of Venice* and *Twelfth Night* and others.

The Shakespearean society viewed women with hostility and had a stern disregard for the opposite sex. For an average woman to be able to act in an acceptable way without being derided, and to show any power recognisable, she has to put on a male garment. There are two Shakespearean female protagonists that choose to cross-dress in the texts examined. These are Portia in *The Merchant of Venice (MV)* and Viola in *Twelfth Night (TN)*.

#### 4.1 **Dress Code as clues to displaying female masculinity (crossdressing, disguise, transgenderism and transvestism in *Merchant of Venice, Twelfth Night* and *Macbeth***

##### 4.1.1 *The Merchant of Venice (MV)*

Although the female disguise in *MV* is somehow effective, yet it is transvestism because Portia's actions are not tailored towards letting her occupy a man's place indefinitely. It is only meant for her to be able to arrest men's attention and exercise her power in a patriarchal environment.

In *MV*, the protagonist puts on a male dress and seems able to play the masculinity in her with conviction in readiness to resist oppression of the courtroom proceedings. It is only as Balthasar she can demonstrate her verbal skills, successfully defending Antonio and moving the entire court with her words.

Portia and Nerissa enter the court transvested and once within the disguise mode they both refer, amusedly, to male characteristics and behavioural traits just to reinforce the dramatic illusion that they are some women who need to make conscious efforts to transgender and remain so.

At that literal level, Portia is able to display a broad range of human characteristic traits in disguise than she could have done as a woman with ascribable hostility meted on women during Shakespeare's era. Portia appears confident in her new role, which involves no physical danger to her person but instead a testing of her existing with verbal abilities, human reasoning and skills, which a woman is equally and 'naturally' formed to possess. This agrees with Nussbaum's liberal model of 'humanism', which affirms that 'reason' becomes the means to argue for entry into *the Humanness* and the means to rights, justice and social fairness. She does not ignore women's possible differences from men but asserts that these do not exclude them from reason or the rights that are attendant upon reason. On

this basis, Shakespeare, just like Nussbaum, includes women in the notion of a universal human-ness, the ability to choose, to be 'truly human being' and reject fixed rule over them. Although Shakespeare tries to emphasise the sexual differences between men and women when Portia and Nerissa see their husbands "in such a habit that they shall think we are accomplished with that we lack," yet, he appreciates the equality of masculine traits in both sexes. He also shares the belief that women are individuals, possessed of reason, that as such they are entitled to full human rights, and that they should, therefore, be free to choose their role in life and explore their full potential in equal competition with men. Shakespeare allows Portia to mock the male gender behaviour as a proof that whatever one's sex, one can achieve whatever one wants to achieve:

**Portia:** When we are both accoutred like young men, I'll prove the prettier fellow of the two and wear my dagger with the braver grace, and speak between the change of man and boy, with a reed voice ...and turn two mincing steps, into a namely stride, and speak of frays, Like a fine bragging youth and tell quaint lies, how honourable ladies sought my love, which I, denying, they fell sick and died 1. vi. 44)

In short, Portia incorporates in one body traditionally male and female attributes, and this does not disqualify her from being a heroine. On the contrary, it positions her as an entirely different kind of heroine, in that she, at once, lays claim to a status usually inhabited only by men, and at the same time transforms and enriches this heroic status by broadening it to include some traditionally female attributes. Portia behaves in line with Nussbaum's liberal policy, which claims that the social and political rights of the gender-neutral individuals reside in their humanity; that is, in what distinguishes them as human, in their ability to reason. The ability to reason means that individuals do not require the help of another person to solve problems.

This female protagonist broadens the category of masculinity by combining female masculinity with traditional feminine characteristics, such as the maternal instinct, by being passionate and flexible, saving the lives of Bathassar and Malvonio. Portia is most visibly an action heroine for changing her dress, she presents audiences with an image of a female character who is both a victim of prejudices and a male lawyer, who works towards rescuing

someone else from imminent heartbreak. She is a character who breaks down the hierarchical division of active/passive, male /female.

Derrida and his followers' deconstruction discovers that these pairs, however "reasonable" they may appear, are not simply oppositions but hierarchies. In each pair, one term is superior, while the other is regarded as inferior. Shakespeare uses it to deconstruct the opposition, in the first instance, then, to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment. To overturn the violent hierarchy, according to Derrida, he first exposes how the privileged term, for instance, male, depends upon the suppressed, the female, in the process of accumulating its own meaning. He, therefore, reverses and overturns the hierarchies, asserting that no text can have a fixed and stable meaning .

#### 4.2 **Dress code: transvestism and disguise in *Twelfth Night* (TN)**

Steven Luke (1974) in Ogundipe (2002:32) avers that "power is achieved by instilling false ideologies in individuals or groups to be controlled so that they act against their own best interests". *Twelfth Night* stands out with regard to Shakespeare's use of resolute female characters who exhibit a strong sense of 'self will' which tends to be a pointer to the attitudes of women in our contemporary society. Such a society will be the one where women will raise their heads in spite of all odds.

The female protagonist in *TN* is, by far, the strongest character in the play. The main character, Viola, has is stranded in a foreign land after a shipwreck that separates her from her twin brother, Sebastian. Viola boldly and willingly adopts the identity of her brother so that she might live independently without a husband or guardian. Shakespeare imbibes the liberalist philosophy here that " individuals – reasoning human beings – do not need the assistance of an external body to trigger off their spontaneous reasoning faculties to contributing positively or otherwise, reasoning is inherently built" (Nussbaum 2000:39)

All individuals are to be 'free' to make their own way and their own wealth and that the social and political rights of gender-neutral individuals reside in their humanity, that is, in what distinguishes them as human, which is their ability to reason. This would be the safest way of surviving without any intimidation and oppression in the patriarchal society of the time. She serves as a courtier to a young, lovesick noble man named Orsino. Throughout the play, she serves as a go-between for Orsino and the woman he loves. In the

course of her services, she ironically falls in love with Orsino before whom she disguises as a man, while Orsino takes the disguised Viola to be a man to be sent always to help woo Olivia. Only at the end does she renounce her male identity and declares her love for Orsino, having succeeded in subverting the society's ethics of women's voicelessness. *TN* portrays a female protagonist who is unwilling to accept the female role of passivity. With steady and incontestable actions, she manipulates her skills and rebels against oppression by disguising as a man for most of the play in order to preserve her state of free will and avoid discrimination that could be meted on women in the society. Nussbaum's ideas of the features of contemporary liberal feminism which dwells much on gender equality is revealed in the text. It highlights some of the issues associated with the notions of reason and "the universal human", a particular version of liberalism that rejects the patriarchal - divine right of men, hereditary power, fixed social hierarchy and arbitrary rule-over any being who possesses reason.

Viola finds comfort in expressing masculine features by transvesting to express both traits in her. Viola thus, disguises, requesting the captain to conceal her transvestism:

O that I served that lady and might not be delivered to  
the world till I had made mine own occasion mellow,  
what my estate is ...conceal me what I am, and my  
aid for such disguise as haply shall become the form of  
my intent. (1.ii.31)

One could see here that Viola as a girl takes up this disguised style of life with all determination but with subtle decision, thereby exhibiting her masculinity as she further says:

I'll serve this duke; thou shall present me as a eunuch to  
him...for I can sing and speak to him in many sorts of  
music that will allow me very worth his service.  
(1.iii.40)

Viola proves the masculinity in her by courageously disguising as a man despite all odds. This earns her a positive result of becoming a Page, serving in the Duke's palace. The boldness in her complements her disguise and strengthens the courageous practices she tactfully demonstrates before her master. Viola's manliness is demonstrated as she never gives room for any iota of suspicion from the Duke. In fact, Viola's looks, activities and actions never belie her disguised status as the Duke, her master, further entrusts his love



affairs with Lady Olivia to her and quickly sends his Page (Viola) to woo and persuade Olivia to be his wife.

It could be firmly put that Viola enjoys life and position as a man, and does not reveal who she is, until the last scene of the play. Viola freely resumes these roles out of her own volition. It is a personal choice based on her desire to exhibit or be in a masculine form with all tactfulness. She says 'I'll do my best to woo your lady'(1.v.21).

The above is noted in Malvolio's report to his lady concerning Cesario:

Madam, yond young fellow swears. He will speak with you. I told him you were asleep and therefore comes to speak with you. What is to be said to him, lady? He's fortified against any denial he's been told so, and he says he'll stand at your door like a Sheriffs' post, and be a supporter to a bench, but he'll speak with you (1.iv.31).

Malvolio also attests to Viola's masculinity thus:

Not yet old enough for a boy. He is very well favoured and he speaks very shrewishly (1.v.22).

In *TN*, Viola appears cross-dressed and transgendered as Cesario in the very first moment of the play and remains so. She becomes so significantly ambiguous at least for the other characters. Being as naturally comfortable to exhibit the dual attributes in her, Viola does not hesitate to show her feminine subjectivity as soon as possible - "whoever I woo, myself would be his wife" (1.v.41). Ironically, she depends on a shared or mixed characteristics between the heroine - Viola - and the personification, the masculine Cesario.

One can perceive the masculine power or fervour, the self-assertion and interest that Viola shows as Cesario when wooing Olivia:

**Viola:** Make me a willow cabin at your gate  
And call upon my soul within the house,  
Write loyal cantons of contemned love  
And sing them out even in the dead of the night  
(I.v 26)

This speech by Viola takes a different approach from other plays of Shakespeare because Viola puts in a kind of disguised performance coupled with what Ringrose (2008:486) calls "precocious femininity, which involved flirtatious but also assertive and extrovert behaviours". Here, Viola is able to act to the level of being accepted by all other

characters including Olivia, the most difficult of all the characters to be won, through manipulative means (Traub, 1992:120). Orsino is also able to establish a close relationship with Cesario, by getting infatuated with the masculinity aspect of the sassy boy, who is really a woman in the theatrical fiction. Although it is true that Viola or Cesario remains sexually ambiguous until the end, she keeps to herself as she bemoans her disguise.

Another point in favour of Viola in her transvested position is the evidence that genders share traits of masculinity and femininity and can combine same as “the boy actor armed himself with his arsenal of female characteristics”(Nussbaum,2000:34). It is shown in the dexterous way with which she displays the dual roles of “a boy actor” through her mannerisms, as well as some socio-cultural traits ascribed to women. At the end, Viola’s masculinity becomes effective to the point that Orsino establishes a close friendship with Cesario and Olivia gets infatuated with the sassy boy. Viola as Cesario remains sexually ambiguous throughout the play, while emphasis is given to her equivocal relationship with others (Howard, 1992:109).

Naturally, a female is expected to keep mute and be silent till death. But here Viola tells Orsino a story about a woman in order to make him aware of his own selfishness, and she is, in a way, telling him her own story:

**Orsino:** And what’s her history?

**Viola:** A blank, my lord. She never told her love. But let concealment like a worm in the bud fed on her damask cheek. She pinned in thought and with a green and yellow melancholy, she sat like patience on a monument smiling at grief (II. iv. 105-111).

Viola skilfully portrays an image drawn or taken from her own concealed experience in order to awaken Orsino’s feelings for somebody else.

Viola, in this sense, adopts male dress to exercise the dual nature in her as a practical means of survival in an alien and chauvinistic society that is strictly conscious of sex identity - boy or girl. Her masculinity, through disguise, does not turn out to be ‘wickedness’. It merely covers those parts of her that too often prevent society from accepting women as beings. She never wavers in her stand as she goes on to woo Olivia as Cessario. The audience always know that underneath the page’s clothes is a real woman: one who freely admits that she has neither desire nor the aptitude to play to the gallery but to fulfil all ‘righteousness’ and prove that

**Cessario:** Too well what love women may have in faith, they  
are as true of heart as we My father had a daughter  
loved a man As it might be perhaps, was I a woman  
(II.iv.104-8).

Viola eventually exhibits those masculine characteristics that challenge her subordinated place in the English Renaissance age. Thus, in her disguised-masculinity, Cessario-Viola, taking decisions and controlling actions, in male disguise, banter easily with Olivia, wrapping herself in a language beyond her love and feminine character. She is able to detach herself from the action of showing her love in *TN* but remains involved bewitching until time “unties the knot”.

This romantic disguised dimension differs completely from the cunning hypocrisy of the complex world, the one that turns out to be a total wickedness of a woman that is trying to exercise meaningless control over anyone best reflected in Shakespeare’s tragedy like *Macbeth*. In essence, this type of disguise of the middle romances has been effective and has allowed the protagonist’s pranks and cleverness wrapped in ironies of life as examined above. It has given her the ample chance at impressing and asserting her desired wills on the society, subverting its general notions of women, believing that women are individuals with ability to reason and find solutions to problems by using the power to think in a logical way. This agrees with the Nussbaum’s liberality model that says ‘If I can think, I can make decisions, and thus, there is no reason for my exclusion from public decision-making.’(Nussbaum,1994:48) .

#### 4.3 **The voiced act as clue to displaying female masculinity (soliloquies, aside, conversational strategy, flattery, persuasion, and prognosis)in: *RJ*, *MV* and *TN***

##### 4.3.1 **Voiced act clue in *RJ***

Shakespeare uses soliloquies to reveal the innermost thoughts and wits of his characters and motivate their actions, as well as exert an unseen force or power on whosoever happens to hear such when said. This later reason becomes operative when Juliet’s soliloquy reveals her love and passion for Romeo, who later gets to know he has been entrapped by the former’s infectious love power. Though Juliet is aware of her limit in openly showing her love, in the city of Verona, where the general rule is to see women as at

their best when submissive, obedient, receptive and silent, while men are always on the move and opposite. In the city, some characteristics are allowed to be shared, but often attributed as coming from one sex, the man.

It is right at the Capulet's banquet and at first sight that Romeo gets hooked by Juliet's beauty because women are usually valued for their physical features and, especially, beauty and praised for feminine virtues like obedience, silence, sexual chastity, piety, humility, constancy and patience.

Juliet's love for Romeo is an equitable experience where she often shows greater sense and courage. Romeo appreciates her exquisite beauty in a soliloquy, when he overhears Juliet's soliloquy by her window. It reveals that she too is passionately in love with Romeo, while her only regrets have been that he is a Montague. It also reveals that Juliet becomes aware of her equitable love and the imminent dangers, so she desperately asks rhetorically, 'What's in a name?' and:

O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo? Deny thy father, and refuse thy name. Or if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love, And I'll no longer be a Capulet(ii.ii.30)

It is through the above soliloquy that Romeo becomes deeply involved with Juliet's love power and its unavoidable effect on him. He is sure of his vulnerability where Juliet's charm is concerned:

**Romeo:** (Aside) Shall I hear more, shall I speak at this?

**Juliet:** What is in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet. So Romeo would, were he not Romeo called, retain that dear perfection which he owes without that title. Romeo doff thy name, and for thy name, which is no part of thee, take all myself.

**Romeo:** I take thee at thy word. Call me but love, and I'll be new baptized. Henceforth I never will be Romeo.

**Juliet:** What man art thou that thus bescreened in night. Sostumblest on my counsel? (I.V.40-45)

It is the effect of soliloquies coupled with aside talks that urge Romeo to climb the very hard and high walls into Capulet's garden. When Romeo first sees Juliet, he inquires:

Did my heart love till now? Forswear it sight.  
For I never saw true beauty till this night.  
(I. V. 53-54)

Through an indirect means, Romeo becomes intoxicated as he values Juliet's powerful physical features and beauty. He begins to woo her in true Renaissance style, using metaphor and witty statements. This brings about a desperate measure through which Romeo throws caution to the winds and kisses Juliet's hands despite her true identity. In spite of vast differences and the strong enmity among the families, Juliet speaks:

How cam'st thou hither, tell me, and for what purpose?  
The orchard walls are high and hard to climb. And the  
place means death to you, considering who you are, if any  
of my relatives find you here. (i.vi.33)

Romeo, not minding his inability to raise up his head and flex the muscles as would have been done by an average social man of Verona city, rather says:

With love's light wings did I o'erperch these walls. For  
stony limits cannot hold love out, and what love can do,  
that dares love attempt, therefore thy kinsmen are no stop  
to me. (i.iv.45)

She is also aware of the dangers of her love and she, subtly advises him to denounce his identity for her own, an outcome of all her masculine forces on the man, kind of using her infectious love to exert forces that trap Romeo to win his lover.

Despite the fact that both of them realise the dangers in this type of love, the spell contained in Juliet's masculinity continues to affect both of them without giving room for rule of reason but passion. Romeo agrees to an extent, to discarding his name:

**Romeo:** By a name I know not how to tell thee who I am.  
My name, dear saint, is hateful to myself because it is  
an enemy to thee. Had I it written, I would tear the  
word (i.iv.58)

All these masculinity features that are identified with Juliet are not exercised in a harsh, aggressive and boastful manner as men would. Rather, Juliet's powers have been immovable, quiet, incontestable and overwhelming. It is indisputable that female masculinity exists in a form different from the men's. It is then seen that such exists in a way that may have been easily dismissed as power of an inferior type just because it is not hard, aggressive and visible like the male form of power. Therefore, looking at such

conventional binary oppositions as male/female, superior/inferior, strong/weak, as they operate in any society, all oppositions that have been customarily considered to be of minor interest have become the focus of interest, with their possible reversals. As it were, new, possible interpretations and new levels of meanings have emerged with the inversion of other binary oppositions that are thought to be major, being overturned.

In truth, women have and can exercise that masculine traits they are inherently endowed with through any means and at any time but differently from the conventional ways. This agrees with Nussbaum's (1994:50) universalised reasoning of humans. It applies enlightenment ideas to women's situation, arguing that as men and women share a universal human capability of reason, women deserve the same rights and opportunities as men. Women are individuals with ability to reason as such they are entitled to full human rights, to choose their role in life and explore their full potentials in equal competition with men. Therefore, women do not use brute strength but rely on techniques to trap, conquer and capture men to abide by their wills, based upon the belief that women are individuals with ability to reason (to find solutions to problems by using the power to think in a logical way), hence, they are entitled to full human rights, and should, therefore, be free to choose their role in life and explore their full potentials in equal competition with men.

In Shakespearean age and drama, the regime of 'masculinity' which has become a predetermined reality, where an average man is believed to be a custodian of the word has come to appreciate gender-neutral language of 'humanity', 'individual' and 'reason, an autonomous rational being' and equality associated with the ability to reason. It is believed that all those who can reason are capable of independent thought and action and should be able to participate in things that concern people in the society.

The word 'masculinity' has been solely ascribed to men, while the women have been taken as the weaker vessels that often go to the wall (Appelbaum, (1997:250). This implies that there is no choosing between being a mouse (weak, female) and a man. The system to believe in both is already in place. If a man is to express himself at all, he is already under compulsion in most situations to do so as a man in all Shakespearean plays. Yet the regime of masculinity has been seen in most of Shakespeare's plays examined to be fundamentally unstable. According to Appelbaum (1997:251), it is the regime of a lack, a kind of pretence regime, operating as if it were the regime of a being, and its goals are always elusive and unclassifiable.

It has been noted, too, that masculinity cuts across gender as the female protagonists examined in Shakespeare's texts have really shown. Romeo never could fathom the impact Juliet's masculine forces had on him until he learnt of her death at her family's tomb. It is at this juncture that Romeo realises the spell Juliet casts on him without raising her voice. He discovers that his self-proclaimed masculinity has been elusive and unrealistic as he begins to make some professions that show his inner mild and tender feelings when he sympathises with Paris, his rival at the graveside:

He told me Paris should have married Juliet said he not  
so? Or did I dream it so? Or am I mad, hearing him talk of  
Juliet, to think it was so? Or give me thy hand, one writ  
with me in sour misfortune's book (ii.vi.44)

At the end, Romeo succumbs to female supremacy and determines that, come what, he will never leave the graveside where Juliet is laid:

O my love, my wife!  
Death, that hath sucked the honey of thy breath,  
Hath had no power yet upon thy beauty.  
Thou art not conquered; beauty's ensign yet  
Is crimson in thy lips and in thy cheeks,  
And death's pale flag is not advanced there.  
(Act V:III:380)

Obviously, all the protagonists examined thus far, in the works of Shakespeare are unique and very different individuals. Nevertheless, they all share characteristics that Shakespeare imparts onto many of his heroines. Each has been resolute at various stages, keeping to her inner mind and feelings. Although the society of their time demands certain behavioural pattern from them, they each chose to undertake a different path to deny expectant behavioural patterns. Rather, 'the self' becomes promoted over what the society prescribes to be the accepted socio-cultural order. Each is not averse to returning to the society's established roles, that of a man articulating himself as a man of authority, which is already in place within Verona city. The entire concept of choice and free will of which Shakespeare was fond, applies as equally to his feminine characters as to his masculine.

It is this very important point which establishes the conclusion that Shakespeare did create realistic and meaningful female masculine characters even in the Renaissance age where social matters eluded women as they were discriminated against and are portrayed as subordinate and untrustworthy characters where decision making is concerned.

#### 4.3.2 The voiced act clue in (TN)

Viola becomes stubbornly persistent in her mission of seeing Lady Olivia who initially refuses to see anybody, Orsino inclusive. But, through Viola's sweet and persuasive utterances, she is privileged to see Olivia, while achieving her desired will. Viola also uses persistence with a peculiar mannerism and endearing charm, and persuades and charms Olivia to reason with 'her' as 'she' delivers the master's message. This she does through sweet, but frank words, and by pouring encomiums on Olivia while trying to lure her into submissiveness:

Most radiant, exquisite and unmatchable beauty –  
I pray you tell me if this be the lady of the home.  
(40)

This masculine behaviour of Viola contradicts or belies the general notion and attitude of men towards the women of the Renaissance era, who are expected to be passive, inactive, docile and pessimistic, quickly giving in to disappointments. Through this gallant action of Viola, she is able to promote the 'self' image over the public image which, naturally, would have been impossible for women in the patriarchal society. Usually, Shakespeare's militant women are not averse to returning to their society's established roles but only if such roles serve their needs at that particular time.

This shows that women in the Renaissance era could defy the general expectations of being submissive and obedient to becoming assertive in a steady and persuasive manner, in order to have control over situations to their advantage.

#### 4.3.3 The voiced act clue in *MAC*

The three weird sisters who are witches initially disguise as real prophetesses bearing good news with which Macbeth is charmed and spurred into his wishful thinking of assassinating King Duncan. Lady Macbeth too supports this prophetic trait as she elaborately welcomes it and plans towards perpetuating the witches' sayings. She begins by flattering her husband and King Duncan by talking of the husband's loyalty, obedience and gratefulness for past honours bestowed:

All our service. In every point twice done, and then done  
double against those honours deep and broad wherewith.  
Your majesty loads our house. For those of old, and the  
late dignities heapt up to them. We rest your hermit's'  
(1:vi:24).



After much flattering and exchange of complimentaries, King Duncan, too, realises the 'power' in this woman's sweet but dangerous compliments which become an unavoidable spell for an average man. He thus confesses ironically:

See, see, our honored hostess! The love that follows us  
sometime is our trouble, which still we thank and see as  
love (1.vi.25)

It is therefore observed that Lady Macbeth's pretty speeches hide a sinister purpose but she tries to belie her true notion, pretending to be loyal, obedient and loving.

A critic says that men do need to look with sceptical eyes at women's show of stupidity (flattery). When men do, it is certain that they will discover probably to their shock, that it is all 'calculated attempt'. It would have been so easy to feign such disguise as one of the attributes of the female super ego as a woman critic, Karen Payne(1983) asserts in Chinweizu (1990:89) that:

Be sympathetic, be tender, flatter deceives, use all the arts  
and wiles within your reach. Never let anybody guess  
that you have a mind of your own.

In *MAC*, it is further noted that there are other sets of female characters who use the element of disguise coupled with prophecies to cause disorderliness and confusion in the well ordered life of Macbeth and other male characters in the play. These other women are the weird sisters, the witches who cast their wishful spell on Macbeth by foretelling, prophesying a great future for the general that he would become the king within a few hours. Macbeth becomes intoxicated with these prophetic sayings and starts planning towards its fulfilment by all means. His inordinate ambition sparks into flame when his boss, King Duncan, bestowed on him the disgraced Cawdor's title in appreciation for his valour at war which eventually leads to the end of the tyrannical king. This marks the beginning of the fulfilment of the witches several prophecies. Women are brilliant manipulators and at times may choose to appear stupid and miserable so as not to wound the male ego while exhibiting the maleness in them. Very unlike the natural behavioural attributes that humans, irrespective of the gender, are endowed with, man or woman could choose to behave as both good or bad, weak or strong, active or passive.

There are other features of masculinity that women use consciously or otherwise to control even the most powerful men to fall headlong into their masculine spells. There are those that are inherently peculiar to women, such as the ones we would tag as bridal power.

Writers tend to realise that play texts should be created to re-interrogate and revisit human-related issues. For this reason, it becomes clarified that females have powers, both negative and positive, which they can choose to use positively or mischievously to direct, control or intimidate their subjects as seen in *Lady Macbeth*.

#### 4.4.0 **Assertiveness as clue to displaying female masculinity (persistence, dominance, control and coercion) in *MV, MAC, TN* and *RJ*.**

##### **Introduction:**

Women display assertive tendencies by being persuasive and persistent in subtle, respective and confident manners. An average assertive woman does this with a smile, with self confidence and an assured posture. In 'the assertive clues' we clarify the masculinity in the female characters who choose to assert themselves in love, through either dominant, persuasive, persistent, control or coercive means and by engaging in societal wars single handedly or in company of others.

In every society, it is always an easy thing to dismiss the fact that female masculinity exists side by side with that of the men's which is aggressive, boastful and tough as against the women's which, as opined in Berth (1998:103) is subtle, self-effacing and pervasive. To her, female masculinity is like an immovable object - 'like the sun that is steady, quiet and incontestable'. Female masculinity, where it exists, whispers, blinks, lures, manipulates, charms and erodes its subjects. They often demonstrate more self-awareness than their male counterparts; they explore the world, take decisions and control actions, but to do so they must often take up male disguise. *Rosalind* is usually at the centre of events, the dominant character in the play; asserting her own desires, knowing what she wants, intellectually able, innovative and resourceful, looking after the needs of her female companion, and able to manipulate *Orlando* and teach him how to woo her. Conversely, *Orlando* can be seen as possessing stereotypically feminine traits -he is submissive to his brother and eliminated easily from his inheritance.

Despite the fact that Portia's late father compelled her only to marry any man who selects from among the three chests or caskets he earlier on proffered, she still prays. Portia uses all the inherent human-ness – the capacity for moral choice, the capacity to be 'choosers' believing like Nussbaum (1999b: 9) that all human beings are not only worthy of equality but they are compelled *to act to achieve* this equality in her to indirectly and subtly dismiss a number of potential suitors, believing that her charming power would play the trick and somehow the one she loves would be the one to pick the right casket as indicated by "the will of her dead father". It is observed that Shakespeare comes down firmly on the side of romantic love and carefully ensures that each character, irrespective of the sex, has the audacity to choose and be betrothed to his or her choice of spouse secretly, without much stress.

#### 4.4.1 Assertiveness clue in *MV*

From the foregoing, Portia already views herself a female who should be drawing upon the shared cultural conceptions of what it means to be a female within her society but, ironically, begins to rise above the stereotype and convention in her actions within and without her disguise. She begins to view herself as possessing that masculine attributes of being instrumental to luring, persuading and subtly affecting her choice of a lover, to picking the real casket containing her portrait, so that her rational wishes could come to fulfilment. Temporarily borrowed breeches also give Portia the opportunity to use her natural intelligence and assertiveness, which otherwise would have remained circumscribed by the walls of Belmont and the conditions of her father's will. They also allow her to prove that her love for Bassanio is stronger than even his bond with Antonio, his intimate friend. Hence, Portia persuades further thus:

I pray you sir, pause a day or two before you hazard,  
for in choosing wrong, I lose your company. Therefore  
forebear awhile, something tells me (but it is not love).  
I would not loose you. And yet a maiden hath no tongue  
but thought... I would detain you here some months;  
(iii: 2, 48)

In the renaissance era where patriarchal power reigns, women are generally enjoined to accept their natural inferiority as they are required to strive for obedience, chastity, silence, and piety (Traub, 2001:130). However, the existence of the notion of 'shrew' in

Shakespeare's text suggests that some women have ways of asserting their desires and will within such ideological constraints. Primmer (1994:18) argues in favour of Shakespeare's portraiture of Portia thus:

In the middle comedies, Shakespeare gave a variety of kinds of power to his heroines. Portia, the most formidable, wealthy and beautiful, a magnet for suitors from the world over. In fact, the competition for Portia's hand combines monetary language - gold and silver - with terms of merit -deserving and giving. She is intelligent, witty and capable of dealing with complex legal and, apparently, mercantile questions. She is quite at home in male disguise, and although she is subordinated to her father's will, she proves a match for it and for all the destructive forces Venice can offer.

During this era, competing versions of masculinity and femininity vied for dominance in a social contestation where there were cultural contradictions and social practices that visited Queen Elizabeth 1<sup>st</sup>, which ushered in women education in full force. The pressure of women pushing against patriarchal strictures became felt throughout Shakespearean plays. However, what it means to be a woman or a man or to desire the same or the opposite sex varies from country to country or culture to culture and changes historically. For instance, during the Shakespearean era, women were considered to be more lustful than men as either of the genders was thought of separately from the body as it is the body that provides the basis for assumptions of gender identity - as being masculine or feminine.

Meanwhile, in the contemporary era, being masculine or feminine is different, as masculinity for example, is typically associated with sexual aggression, while femininity is otherwise. This stereotypical difference explains why Nigerian contemporary women tenaciously hold on to what Estes (1995:124) calls "the dual nature of women", or "this two-women-who-are-one" which propels a woman not to show her innermost feelings even when in love as confirmed by Muray (1987) in Chinweizu (1990:22):

They don't use brute strength, but rely instead on technique, and that women tend to emphasize skill rather than aggression which makes for a better game. Female power whispers, manipulates, and erodes. It tends to be subtle and could use natural endearment to captivate men in their wild, aggressive state of being.

Portia, as a lawyer in the court, boldly begins the duty she has promised herself. She first persuades Shylock to temper justice with mercy because it is expected of a Jew to show mercy. But Shylock, being a hard-hearted man, would not see why he should take to Portia's appeal. All he wants is for the lawyer to approach the matter as it should be. Shylock then bids: "My deeds upon my head! I crave for the law, the penalty and forfeit of my bond" (4:1:62). Portia, in her masculinity trait, continues to persuade Shylock persistently, and of course, loudly manipulating the situations so as to steadily have full control over the case without revealing her identity. She pretends to be taking sides with the law of the land and professes:

It must not be, there is no power in Venice can alter a decree established it will be recorded for a precedent, and many an error be example will rush into the state. It cannot be (4.1.71).

Although everybody present in the courtroom believes Portia to be the real lawyer expected to handle the case on ground, the tactics of the women at getting whatever they wish at odd times cannot be ruled out here. Portia demonstrates a kind of female masculinity, as she subtly joins and juxtaposes masculine and feminine attributes, which according to Chinweizu (1990:23), is:

Just as the air, though everywhere is hardly noticed. It's quiet ubiquity acts like a camouflage. It's vastly greater might is so well entrenched, in both biology and social arrangements, that it does not need to call attention to itself, and so goes largely unremarked. This all makes female power hard to see, hard to challenge and even harder to overthrow. It is like an immovable object, it is like the unsteady, quiet and incontestable.

Portia is depicted as having the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but the heart and stomach of a king. She literally becomes a man in order to invade the Venice society because, according to critics, the world of Venice is labelled as 'masculine' due to its busy daytime with the attendant harshness and unscheduled world, while Belmont is labelled as 'feminine' due to its unequal calmness at night time coupled with the soft and relaxed environment (Kimbrough, 1992:23). The separation of these two worlds is so great that Portia needs become a man in order to subdue it. Again, she would need to take prompt decisions and control actions on ground and, to do so, she must hide her sense of mercy

behind the cloak of the law to enable her exhibit the masculine trait in her through disguise which becomes paradoxical in form. This goes in tandem with the submission of Adimora-Ezeigbo (2012: 7)

women have to really negotiate with men to have a stake in this country, because our society is very patriarchal and women don't really have many chances to make progress if they don't have the co-operation of men.

This means that an average woman like Portia would need to apply some intelligence to be able to live and cope with her patriarchal environment.

The above paradoxical act is further corroborated by Primmer (1994:46):

Cross-dressing suggests a paradox: that because they are females, these characters do not have the appropriate power they need for the circumstances in which they find themselves, and yet also that they have exactly that power, because when they are cross-dressed, they are still female and still manage to achieve their aims. In other words, the plays infer that for a woman to have power does not require that she stop being female but that she stop being perceived as feminine so that other characters may react differently to her for a while. This indicates the difference between female and feminine: women are not supposed to become successful advocates, or live out in a forest: yet they are clearly capable of doing so.

The conventional and unconventional strategies of ruling are evinced in the court proceedings. The reactions of Lawyer, Shylock and others are worthy of note. The idea of a lawyer pleading with the accused and the eloquent plea for mercy, coupled with the protest by the principal actors demanding mercy, reveal that masculine prerogatives are based on custom, not naturally done in law court. It is with the exception of Shylock who keeps on repeating; "I stand for judgment" (IV.I.103), "I stand here for law" (1.42). Still, it resides with Portia to make the trial a clear-cut matter, not openly taking side with any faction, especially as "she is the salvation of the play due to her wealth, her wits and her pleading of a feminine quality (Barbara in Kimbrough (1992:23).

Portia perseveres in pleading with Shylock to take money and accept nullification of the bond but he insists on taking a pound of flesh nearest to the debtor's heart even swearing by his sons that no power in the tongue of man will sway his position. With the manipulative skills natural to women, Portia encourages Antonio to prepare his breast for

the knife. She further orders Shylock to get a scale reads to weigh the flesh and invite a doctor to see that Antonio's blood is not spilt or wasted, otherwise Shylock will forfeit all his goods to the state of Venice. The pronouncement terrifies Shylock because he knows that he will not be able to meet the condition imposed on him.

The twist surprises everybody because it is not possible for an incision to cut the flesh of a living man without spilling his blood, let alone a deep cut close the heart which solely engaged in pumping blood. By this intervention, the rescue of Antonio from Shylock becomes apparent. This is where Nussbaum's notion of liberalism fits in that 'the rights of the gender-neutral individuals reside in their humanity, that is, in what distinguishes them as human, which is their ability to reason' (Nussbaum,2000). What makes the difference here is Portia's ability to reason and proffer needed solution, not her gender categorisation.

After her eloquent talk on the attributes of mercy, she declares:

Therefore, Jew though justice be thy plea, consider this,  
that in the course of justice none of us should see  
salvation: We do pray for mercy, and that same prayer  
doth teach us all to render, the deeds of mercy.  
(195-200)

Portia thus, exhibits assertive traits of persistence and control to assert her will to win at the law court. Here, Shakespeare creates a fictional structure by which the ideology of male dominance breaks down. The woman is the only source of secure wealth, the only person in the courtroom capable of successfully playing a man's part and ousting the alien intruder. Portia may be an exception to her culture's patriarchal assumptions but she, like Elizabeth, is an exception that has continued to provoke uneasiness amongst men as Eyeh (2011:7) observes:

To the 16th century England, Elizabeth I was originally feminine mystique: A woman so strong, a politician so skilful, a monarch so magnetic that she impressed herself indelibly on the minds of her people to reshape the fate of England. Her mind has no womanly weakness.

At the conclusion of the trial, Portia wins all points and will have, as her only reward, the ring she has given to Bassanio at their marriage with the admonition that it should never part from him. Bassanio holds out well against Portia's request until Antonio swings the balance:

My Lord Bassanio, let him have the ring. Let his deserving and my love withal be valued 'gainst your wife's commandment, (IV.i.447-449).

The point Shakespeare appears to be making here is the old argument that Renaissance masculine love or caritas is of higher regard than romantic love, and the lesson would seem unchanged by the comic distress of Bassanio in Act V. Portia's matter must be seen as something other than the mere love interest in a romantic comedy. Going back to her symbolic value in the casket episode, it is remembered that her picture is counterpoised against the death's head and the fool's head, that as such, it shows her to represent life and wisdom, salvation and reason in search of eternal beatitude. It is just immediately after Bassanio's choice of the correct casket and his perusal of the portrait inside, that Portia declares her love for him and puts the ring in his finger. In the mystical significance of this wedding, Bassanio is bewitched despite the reversal of gendered order/role. His marriage to Portia has not only been the culmination of a romantic attachment but also the consecration of a perfect union and mark of submissiveness from her side. Although a kind of equality of gender roles and relations is established in that Portia tries to show the point that a woman can also express her innermost feelings, not minding the societal belief. Thus Portia declares:

If you had known the virtue of the ring, of half her worthiness that gave the ring, or your own honour to contain the ring, you would not then have parted with the ring.

(V.i.199-202)

What an exhibition of a typical male femininity when Bassanio renews his oath to keep the ring and never to make such a mistake again, he does so not merely upon his life as he has done before but this time upon his immortal spirit:

pardon this fault, and by my soul, I swear I never more will break an oath with thee.

(V.i.247-248)

#### 4.4.2 Assertiveness clue in *RJ*

Juliet must have gone through training in the realities of social codes and etiquette of Verona as evident in her initial taciturn approach to her forceful parental proposed marriage to Paris. With her intellectual reasoning as human who has the ability to know right from



wrong, and who would not need the assistance of an external body to trigger her spontaneous reasoning abilities to make a choice, marital, inclusive, she displays both obedience, as well as a freedom to observe before choosing her partner. Juliet's masculine features exalt and isolate, as well as grant her the boldness to pursue her love to the end. In fullness of her masculinity traits, Juliet becomes more concerned with practicalities than to be a woman swept by passion. Her perceptions are full of violence and she talks in paradoxes. She describes their love as swift flash of light in the night. They are light to each other in a world full of darkness, an unfriendly world.

Furthermore, the masculinity in Juliet becomes pronounced when she derives strength from her ideal love to Romeo despite the coldness with which her parents and the nurse reject her after the consumation of her marriage. She shows her womanly strength as she equally believes in the absolute nature of her love, hidden in the strength of her trust in Romeo's love. She is prepared to face whatever rejection and isolation with courage and profound action. It is this boldness, the masculinity in her, that encourages her to readily accept to drink the 'sleep inducing drug' from Friar. Her subtle but assertive tendency does the magic in addition.

#### 4.4.3 Assertiveness clue in *MAC*

It is true that within a play, female characters may perform any part of the action without necessarily altering the status quo. In this play, it is clear that Lady Macbeth is right to be loyal to Macbeth, her husband and to defend him. But her assertiveness coupled with her swift actions are mere replacement of, not a rival to, men's authority. This only conforms to the notion of Frey (1990) in Primmer (1994:311) that masculinity needs not be limited by social expectations of appropriate behaviour for either of the sexes.

However, contrary to what some feminists, men and women, would have the world believe that women are controlled and subjugated by their husbands, female power exists. Every man is directly or indirectly under female masculinity's sway, as wives have their styles of ruling and exploiting their husbands. They equally have their various ways of achieving whatever their goals are, especially in situations involving cases where they are expected to make decisions. In life, an average woman has chances of exercising power over her husband. A man is allowed by the marital constitution of any society to divulge

information to his 'second best', the bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh in order to achieve the best result. So, it is at the point of requesting for a useful input from a woman that she seizes her chance of a deceitful and hypocritical look as it happens between Lady Macbeth and her husband. It is a play that really indicates that people may appear innocent outwardly, but could be deadly, underneath.

*Macbeth* is among the best known of Shakespeare's plays. It is largely based upon the historical account of King Macbeth of Scotland. The play could be seen as an archetypal tale of the dangers of the lust for power and the betrayal of friends. It is also a kind of play with a theme of appearance and reality of ideas. It shows how far a female could go at exercising that masculine but negative trait in her in order to achieve what she wants.

Some women, as Ashmore (1996:76) posits, engage in behaviours whose meanings are more masculine by behaving in a dominant, competitive, forceful and autocratic way other than what the society expects of them. However, it is not the behaviours themselves that are important but the meanings applied to those behaviours. Lady Macbeth, for instance, demonstrates some masculine powers to make the play *Mac*, what it has been over the years, but further meanings justify her case.

Macbeth tells his wife the strange prophecies of the witches. Instantly, Lady Macbeth becomes so instigated and power-conscious that she desires a high place for her husband and herself. With this assertive tendency, she coerces Macbeth to murder Duncan, the king and becomes instrumental, rational and dominant, in exhibiting her masculinity traits in diverse ways.

#### 4.4.4 **Assertiveness clue of coercion, persuasion, control and domination in *MAC***

After the three weird sisters' predictions that Macbeth's life would change, ambitions set in and the brave Macbeth is poisoned by lust for power and over-zealousness. Macbeth immediately sends a letter to his wife, Lady Macbeth, informing her of the witches' prophecies. This triggers Lady Macbeth's inherent masculinity as she begins her plans on the matter as she immediately takes charge of the situation, declaring:

"Glamis thou art and Cawdor and shalt be what thou art promised. Yet do I fear thy nature, it is too full o'th' milk of human kindness"(Act 1:5:14).

Lady Macbeth does not pretend to cover up the fact that she has been the active dictator, and controller ruling her husband all along. She not only worries that Macbeth may be `too full of the milk of human kindness` to kill Duncan but also confesses to the fact that her husband is only being a weakling who could not hurt a fly and that his nature is too soft to murder or nurse any high ambition.

To Lady Macbeth, her husband is known to many as a brave man full of ambitious and vigorous actions but unfortunately is a stark weakling. She says so to justify her persuasive typical masculine traits. She does not hide the fact that Macbeth can only act on her impulse as evidenced in the instant letter Macbeth sends to his wife. Here, Lady Macbeth represents Macbeth's doubts and fears or the 'feminine' order within him.

From the just concluded war, Macbeth is seen as the defender of Scotland against the triple alliance of the enemies: King of Norway, the rebel Macdonald and the secret rebel – the Thane of Cawdor. It is when he returns from his victory over this alliance that he meets with the three witches who prophesy a great future for him. Immediately, the masculine nature of the weird sisters bewitches Macbeth to the extent that he is mesmerised into planning for the inevitable acts.

Lady Macbeth too follows the pattern of such prophecies against the Thane of Cawdor. She casts her masculine spell on her husband, who decides instantly to covet his master's post. She persuades Macbeth that the only way to become recognised and crowned as the prophesied king is to murder Duncan. Lady Macbeth succeeds in persuading Macbeth to perpetuate the murderous action against the feminine nature of her husband. Also, it is notable that despite she has insalated a strategy,, Lady Macbeth begins to doubt her husband's firmness and promptness to successfully execute the plan.

So even when Macbeth begins to consider backing out of the act:

We will proceed no further in this business: He hath honoured me of late, and I have bought Golden opinions from all sorts of people, which would be worn now in their newest gloss, soon.

She instantly coerces him into action, teasing and scolding that he is too decent and squeamish to murder Duncan for the crown:

From this time such I Account thy love. Art thou  
afraid, to be the same in thine own act and valour. As  
thou in desire? And live a coward in thine own  
esteem?

(1.7.40)

She further controls and encourages Macbeth saying:

Glamis thou art and Cawdor and shalt be what thou art  
promised (1.7.45).

Lady Macbeth thus exercises her masculine order and control over the husband as she  
directs:

Thus thou must do, Hie thee hither, that I may pour  
my spirits in thine ear and chastise with the valour of  
my tongue” (2:1:41).

From this, it is glaring that the iron lady asserts her will on her husband especially  
with harsh and authoritative words that pierce through his heart that before then have been  
described as on the one “too full o’th’ milk of human kindness”, to the one confessing later:  
“I have done the deed, is this a dagger which I see before me? The handle toward my  
hand? Come, let me clutch thee” (2:2:43).

These assertive tendencies of Lady Macbeth agree with the submission of Stets and  
Burke (1996:196):

Females with a more masculine gender identity are more  
likely to express negative, oppositional, dominating  
behaviour such as complaining, criticizing or putting down  
their spouse.

Further still, in her assertive behaviour, Lady Macbeth coerces her husband into killing the  
king. Although the feminine attribute in her discourages her from carrying out the murder,  
she encourages and coerces Macbeth to do it. Lady Macbeth eventually dismisses any form  
of fear or failure in Macbeth thus:

**Macbeth:** If we should fail?

**Lady Mac:** We fail? But screw your courage to the sticking  
place, and we’ll not fail. When Duncan is asleep,  
what cannot you and I perform...? Duncan? Who  
shall bear the guilt of our great quell?

(1: 7:46)

From this discussion, Lady Macbeth knows immediately that her husband's determination to perpetuate this criminal act has slackened. Even when Macbeth expresses his desire to bow out of the wicked act, Lady Macbeth urges him on:

When you durst do it, then you were a man; And, to be more than what you were, you would be so much more the man. Nor time nor place did then adhere, and yet you would make both: they have made themselves, and that their fitness now does unmake you. I have given suck, and know how tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me: I would, while it was smiling in my face, have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums and dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you have done to this. (1: 7: 33)

Macbeth's reluctance to murder Duncan is the evidence of his femininity trait. Here also, Shakespeare overtly contrasts male and female values, trying to prove that masculinity traits are all but learned behaviour.

Lady Macbeth's courage at carrying out her plan is further amplified when she states how easy it would have been even for her to suffer and deprive her most loved son of maternal love and would have plucked her nipple from his boneless gums and dashed the brains out, had she so sworn (1:7:58). Lady Macbeth accuses Macbeth of cowardice and lack of manliness when she discovers that he is already making up his mind against Duncan's murder. She boldly asserts that she would not mind killing her own son rather than breaking any vital promises made in time like this. Lady Macbeth decides to become an active partner in her husband's deadly plans, so she prays, 'Come you spirits ...unsex me here', and talks of crushing the babe at her breast. Lady Macbeth ultimately embodies the relationship between gender and power by repeatedly seeking to emasculate Macbeth as a strategy to convince him to murder Duncan.

Thus, hesitantly and rather reluctantly, Macbeth succumbs to his wife's urgings and assertive will. He stabs the King in his bedchamber after his wife, Lady Macbeth, has succeeded in drugging the attendants at Duncan's palace: "...I have drugged their possets, that death and nature..." (Acts. ii: ii). So, she goes on to convince and instill her fears in him. Thus, in a case where the wife usurps the position which the patriarchal society has stereotypically assigned to husbands, there is reversal of roles which points to the existence of female masculinity in the Renaissance which was essentially a patriarchal society. Lady

Macbeth has been able to successfully manipulate and brow-beat her husband by reversing a kind of gender role; a pointer to equality of gender. This point thus demonstrates that social identities could exist unaffected by gendered ideals.

One can conclude that throughout the plays examined, contradictory versions of the female gendered masculinities are simultaneously constructed. In the same manner, those male characters are subject to the construction of identities the society ascribes to their gender which do not transcend the circumstances and period of their own creation. This study demonstrates that the potency of masculinity or femininity is affected by the gender of its possessor and that gender is a socio-cultural construct. In consonance with the declaration of Allen (1986) in Chinweizu (1990:38):

There is a deep-seated fear of woman in everyman and an average man harbours a sense of powerlessness towards a woman's sexuality and becomes vulnerable as well.

The major protagonists of the selected Shakespearean plays –Viola in *Twelfth Night*, Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*, Lady Merchant in *Macbeth* and Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*, reflect an interesting blend of masculine and feminine attributes. They are seen as fully capable of taking up a male role and behaviour. In the end, they may return to their feminine roles, but they have achieved a kind of empowerment. They often demonstrate more self-awareness than their male counterparts; they explore the world, take decisions and control actions, but to do so they must, in some cases, take up male disguise. Meanwhile, they initially as women display their capabilities for playing the male role. These women are usually at the centre of events, dominating other characters in the plays, asserting their own desires, knowing what they want, intellectually able, innovative and resourceful, looking after their needs as they are able to manipulate situations and people, men, alike.

We have tried to challenge traditional notions held in favour of men in patriarchal societies. For instance, in the English Renaissance age men, were accorded such attributes as being masculine, powerful, tough, domineering, controlling and dictating the pace for others. Women were believed to be feminine, powerless, soft, subservient, and dogmatically submissive. But from the masculine stance of our heroines, the above binary oppositions have been disregarded as they are challenged by our heroic women as such stereotypes are dislodged, yielding relevance to other varieties or clues of masculinity other than the regimented form ascribed to men.

Obviously, all the women examined in the plays of Shakespeare are very different individuals as they all share unique characteristics that the playwright discovered and, in some cases, imparted in his heroines. Each becomes resolute at various points and knows her mind. Despite the fact that the societies of the time demand certain behavioural pattern, which relegated women to the background, they each choose to undertake different paths. For instance, Viola dares the societal norms and acts manly to prove the need for her society to, also, accept her as it would a man.

Whatever the means, notwithstanding, it is a question of using competencies, skills and talents of each individual, male or female, of involving both women and men in building society, solving problems and preparing for eventualities. For the society or community to develop, it would involve the active participation of all its human resources and both women and men must participate fully to meet the different needs of the society. This is what happens when Viola, Portia and Titubi engage in physical and psychological disguise to achieve their desired wills in order to meet the different needs of the society amidst patriarchal intimidation within their various societies.

#### **4.5 Body language as clue to displaying female masculinity (flirtatious and glamorous outlook, gestures and bodily posture) in *MV* and *RJ***

##### **4.5.1 Introduction**

The inner message is profound, that is, that the life force of the beautiful wilderwoman personified by her hair continues to grow and to live and to emanate conscious knowing even though overtly silenced and buried (Estes, 1997: 410).

Social interactions between humans require numerous forms of verbal and non-verbal communication. The non-verbal communication, the exchange of information and meaning, in most cases, are needful in the facial expressions, gestures and movement of the body in a world of romance, especially, between a man and woman. These non-verbal cues are referred to as body language. These are indirectly used in most of the texts examined in the study by almost all the protagonists.

#### 4.5.2 Body language clue in *MV*

Estes (1997:214), in her submission, as regards the human body remarks:

The body is a powerful vehicle, a spirit who lives with us, a prayer of life in its own right. The body is a multilingual being; it speaks through its colour, its temperature, the flush of recognition, the glow of love. It speaks through the leaping of the heart and rising hope.

To her, to confine the beauty and value of the body to anything less than this magnificence above “is to force such a body to live without its rightful spirit, its form, its right to exultation”. Ordinary, an average woman understands that her frame is her beauty, her smile one of wisdom, and that the voice of God is always close to her lips. She, therefore, realises that there is much to beauty as it can speak volumes (Estes, 1997:215).

The romantic love and the captivating beauty of Portia with the episode of the caskets are inextricably intertwined. The first awareness of Portia, before her appearance on stage in the second scene of the play, is through Bassanio’s eyes. He describes Portia as his beloved to his friend declaring that ‘beyond her beauty and her wealth is her goodness’. In Belmont, she is fair and fairer than that word of wondrous virtues (I.i.161-163) in a purely analogical scrutiny, as Belmont is considered the spotless domain that houses virtues in terms of goodness. Similarly, Portia’s spotless and captivating beauty gives her certain attributes of dignity. Apart from her early discernible features such as weariness with “this great world” and her determination to fulfil her father’s will, Portia’s symbolic and captivating beauty emerges clearly in the casket episode. In the first instance, all her suitors, especially Morocco, describe Portia as a creature whom “all the world desires from the four corners of the world of the earth, they come... to kiss this shrine, this mortal breathing saint” (II.i.28 – 30).

Prince Aragon, who has been arrogant and puffed up with pride too, had it tamed as he is bewitched by Portia’s beauty claiming that he “will not choose what many men desire”, because (he) will not jump with common spirits (II.ix.31-32). Similarly, Shakespeare places much power in Portia’s beauty ably represented by the imagery of her golden hair and as Bassanio too, ponders on his choice, he meditates on the gold as the



crowning of a beautiful woman. He declares further: “here in her hairs, the painter plays the spider, and halt woven. A golden mesh t’entrap the hearts of men” (III.ii.120-122).

This implies that in a romantic description, a hair crown stands for the beauty of a woman that traps the heart of a man in earthly love. Portia’s hair mystically stands for that quality in a female’s all encompassing power through which the heart is to be entrapped and to be perfectly submissive to a woman’s flirtatious look.

Therefore, a hint of the masculine traits embedded in Portia’s glamorous beauty is thus, established between Bassanio and Portia by the conversation they both indulged in before Bassanio makes his choice of a casket saying “promise me life, and I’ll confess the truth” (34) that is, of how he has been bewitched by her beauty. It is shown that the ‘life’ Bassanio pleads for is not the life of just making a right choice of the casket but that of an eternal pledge to have a blissful wedlock with Portia “till death do them part”. Thus, Portia succeeds at using her flirtatious cues on persuading Bassanio to make a choice of the casket with various statements coupled with her symbolic statement of a winning warrior;

If you love me, you will find me out... music is  
even as the flourish when true subjects bow to a new-  
crown monarch, I stand for sacrifice. (III.iii.57)

Portia’s bewitching beauty thus has comfort for Bassanio’s fear and in itself echoes also her self assertion that, if he “loves her, he will find her out”.

Portia appreciates Bassanio’s happy choice and her metaphor of ‘subject’ bowing to ‘a new-crown monarch’ with the bestowal of her ring (III.II.171), which proves the importance of the wild nature, in Portia saying; “I can track and run and summon and repel”. And of which Estes (1997:12) affirms:

She can camouflage and love deeply. She is the female  
soul... and all that is of instinct of the worlds  
both seen and hidden. We each receive from her a  
glowing cell which contains all the instincts and  
knowing needed for our lives.

Portia is definitely in love with Bassanio, even though the socio-cultural etiquette forbids her to openly move up to show this fact, yet with the subtle masculine trait in her, she succeeds in achieving her desired will of influencing her choice of a lover. This goes against the society’s wish as expressed by her late father who wishes, that some suitors must

take to some oaths or tests if they want to marry her. Some men have already come to Belmont in the hope of marrying Portia in conjunction with the late father's wish as expressed by Nerissa:

Your father was never a virtuous holy man. At his death (he) has good inspiration on the lottery that he hath devised in these three chest of gold, silver, lead, and whereof who chooses his meaning chooses you.

(Act 1:2:26)

In so doing, countless suitors ranging from Count, Prince, Lord, Soldiers and a host of highly placed men within the society have come, seeking Portia's hand in marriage, after she has succeeded in casting her spell on them through her flirtations and glamorous aesthetics.

Shakespeare tries to show that, although his women could be vulnerable, weak and passive, they have some endearing and charming attributes, which could be captivating and intimidating, so as to entrap men to succumb to their wills without much noise or stress. In the play, Portia exhibits the masculinity in her via the body language features that entrap some other people around her. These attributes arrest the attention of both the rich, the poor, the princes and peasants who are men of high status and who are "too prodigal in living", even though she has not been given a free hand to choose a right person to marry, even at her ripe age. Her father conventionally arranges a selfish test for selecting the man his daughter should marry. By this test, Portia's future suitor's level of sincerity and choice would be measured and judged. Portia tries to sum up this attitude, "the will of a living daughter curbed by the will of a dead father" (Acts 1:2:20).

Portia does not overtly rebel against her father's wish but only grumbles. However, she is able to lure, captivate and entrap lots of men with the masculine attributes inherent in her flirtatious and glamorous look.

#### 4.5.3 **Body language clue in *RJ***

Masculinity is an all embracing tendency naturally found in a person, irrespective of the gender, through which such a person is identified as being relevant to the society, as well as an active member of the society. This trait is trans-gendered in nature, in that, humans are equally formed and possibly shared unique and similar attributes. Ironically, masculinity becomes perceived in another way in the renaissance era as ideas surrounding it came into being through the biblical and classical literature whose ideas were based on men superiority over the women. Despite the strong stereotype notions and definitions that have come to be ascribed with masculinity as ‘a prefixing of the rules guiding gender and sexuality’ especially, men in this point, proves this idea otherwise. According to Leann (2008:2), these male roles could not be gendered because, the absence of women from such roles raised two important issues. The first issue is that men who are already ascribed masculine status could not assert the masculinity in them in the absence of women because one cannot discuss being masculine, without the presence of another person who is feminine. They surely need the presence of women and all the societal traits ascribed for men’s self-assertion, especially, that of asserting to being physically strong in defence of their manliness. Thus, this single dependence on or impregnating a woman to show virility allows both genders to associate with another, an evidence of their cross-gendered identities.

The play *RJ* is set within the city of Verona where the interest of the patriarchal fathers take supremacy over their daughters’ choice of lovers. It is where masculinity as above becomes a regime and a dominant system that is held to account for violence and oppression among men. It is solely men’s attribute and it is often rehearsed as the Lord’s prayer where “to move is to stir and to be valiant is to stand”(Nussbaum, 2000). In spite of the patriarchal nature of the society, female masculine effects become highly incontestable and quite binding on everybody as noted in the roles women play in *RJ* especially, the Nurse and Juliet. This agrees with Freud Sigmund (1963) cited in Chinweizu (1990:132):

In the greater number of ambitious day-dream we can discover a woman in some corner for whom the dreamer performs all his heroic deeds and at whose feet all his triumphs are to be laid.

No one can therefore, be powerful on his or her own because power, like communication, is a two-edged sword. It is the construction of femininity and masculinity within the society that restricts women, although they might have believed that the problem lies in the fact that they are women. Women have their natural and unique characters with peculiar attributes, which could be captivating and charming in nature. These attributes could be subtle but very powerful.

*RJ* is a play that could be likened to the most popular biblical love of Samson and Delilah which was love at sight through the attraction of some kind. Despite the fact that Romeo goes about with that prefixing of the rules guiding the masculinity concept, he falls prey of Juliet's aesthetic attributes. He becomes fascinated by the infectious, charming and flirtatious look of Juliet immediately he sets eyes on her.

It is at a night party on the street of Verona where the two prominent but stark enemies of each other, the Montagues and the Capulets, become affected by the strong and assertive decision of their children especially, Juliet to come together amidst all odds. It all started with an invitation to a banquet at the Capulet's garden one night, which ushers in the Montagues – Romeo and other cousins who go into the garden disguised or masked. Romeo sees Juliet when he is dancing at night. He becomes spell-bound by Juliet's exceptional beauty and charm.

Romeo himself speaks of 'sad hours seem long' when he wishes to know if the day is yet young. But the moment Romeo gets to the Capulet's banquet, he masks up to attend the party uninvited, he meets Juliet instead and falls in love with her. It is this love-stricken Romeo who sees Juliet for the first time at the Capulet's feast and bursts open.

O she doth teach the touches to burn bright  
It seems she hangs up on the cheek of night  
As a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear  
Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear  
Soshows a snowy trooping with crows.

(I.v. 45 – 49)

Romeo's sadness is forgotten as soon as he sets eyes on Juliet, he wonders; "Did my heart love till now? (I.v.57)". Romeo asks Juliet to be like the image of the saint, immovable, while he kisses her and so purges off his dangerous passion. The effect of

Juliet's look on Romeo becomes so much that he readily accepts to become anything that would enable him win Juliet's love as he says:

See how she leans her cheek upon her hand! O  
that I were love upon that hand that I might  
touch that cheek (RJ 2:2.54).

Romeo is further bewitched as he tries to confide in Friar Lawrence, his godfather, who expresses concern over his moody appearance. Thus your early arrival here does assure me that you have been awakened owing to some of anxiety your mind.. Romeo has not gone to bed tonite. (II.vii.67)

Romeo confesses thus:

I have been feasting with my enemy where on a  
sudden one hath wounded me my heart's dear love is  
set on the fair daughter of rich Capulet as mine on  
hers, so hers is set on mine, and all combined. I pray  
thee, chide me not; her I love now (II.iii.68).

As a matter of fact, one has to agree with Chinweizu (1990:37) who states the effects and the intimidating power that are inherent in a woman's glamorous look. To him, the aim of glamour, like magic and enchantment is to confuse the senses of the on-lookers, to dull their reason, to induce in them beliefs which the sober mind would dismiss.

With her voiceless communicative clues, Juliet entraps all the men in the city of Verona – the tough, brave, violent and the weak alike. Romeo and Juliet refuse to back-out of their love in spite of all odds and still continue in their love jamboree. The prettiness, coupled with the attractive features of Juliet, captivates Romeo's attention and he takes further resolution to woo and plan hidden marriage activities with her:

What lady's that which doth enrich the hand of  
yonder knight? O she doth teaches the touches to  
burn bright it seems she hang upon the cheek of  
night I'll watch her place of stand for I never saw  
true beauty till this night I pray that thou consent to  
marry us today. (I: V: 41)

This is in line with the idea of Chinweizu (1996:37) :

When a woman arms herself with glamour and goes  
looking for Prince Charming, her objective is to  
bewitch him out of his senses, so he can blissfully  
make with her a bargain most unfair to himself.

Despite the fact that these two foremost families are bitter rivals, their children connive to marry and spend a blissful night in each other's arms.

Also, in Capulet's banquet, Romeo is besotted by Juliet's beauty and compares her beauty to the sun whose luminescence has the power to eclipse the brightness of the moon. Immediately Juliet realises that she already entices her admirer who also comes from the most dreaded family, she subtly and indirectly casts her spell on Romeo. Juliet's masculine power as recalled in the text could be likened to the natural movement of the air. Air circulates everywhere but is hardly noticed. This is an average woman's power which could be quite ubiquitous and is like a camouflage as dramatised when Juliet acts as if she does not know the bewitching effect she is already having on Romeo when she asks further: "What man art thou that thus be screened in night so stumblest on my counsel?" (2:2:55) . She goes further and asks how Romeo has been able to climb the high walls to the Capulet's compound. The love-dazed Romeo has no alternative as he has been so seduced that he confesses: "With love's light wings did I 'o'erperch those walls' for stone limits cannot hold love out".

It is not too difficult for Romeo to climb the overhead walls that have been so described as 'high and hard to climb' which he climbs with love's light wings for stone limits cannot hold love out. However, he becomes trapped with Juliet's love that he becomes afraid to let go of such a love . This corroborated by Appelbaum's (1997:250) submission that: "Romeo's manliness is put in the service of a woman (and that) 'love makes men lame and tame' and a man in love could be taken to have been blind to his best interests".

This fact could be better put that a man's love is a temporary insanity, which is only curable by marriage – the resultant end of an average woman's masculine tactics. Romeo gets trapped by Juliet's beauty to the extent that he decides to stay and face any inevitable end than running away. So, Romeo who has been rendered powerless readily surrenders as he says: "Let me be tane let me be put to death I am content, so thou wilt have it so come death, and welcome! Juliet wills it so" ( III:V:56).

Romeo, instead of moving, being active and militant as Verona men would be, becomes captured like a woman whose place is to the “wall” (which means to run for refuge; a hidden abode).

#### 4.5.4 Shakespeare’s perception of women

Women have been fascinating subjects of literature or literary creativity from time immemorial. They are perceived from various angles by various writers. Some discuss about the way women are treated either by themselves or by men, while some try to allocate powers to female characters while trying to negotiate their relationships with others in stories.

In Shakespearean’s works it is curious to note that the different roles of women which many critics identify as two dimensional and unrealistic, portray some women as being subservient and homely, and some as being powerless, naïve and weak. These are the conventional women who have no clue as to their place in the scheme of things. Such are the women that are sorely oppressed.

Shakespeare never fathoms much difference in both genders even though his society demands different behavioural rules. He creates most of his heroines to deny that behaviour, believing that the concept of choice and free will apply as equally to his feminine, as well as his masculine characters. He creates realistic, as well as meaningful female characters, who act just like their male counterparts. Shakespeare creates and uses realistic heroines, such as Portia, Viola and others, to undertake some notable and outstanding tasks that are worthy of emulation. Shakespeare does create sole, outstanding or individualistic heroine who will, in isolation, exercise her masculinity independent of other people. Some of Shakespeare’s heroines are drawn from rich backgrounds, believing in their wealth-power to manipulate situations as it happens in Portia’s case.

In summary, it is discovered that despite these binary oppositions, both men and women share a symbiotic relationship as they both need each other to survive. This shows a complementary nature of both sexes as the two classes in the society must cooperate and work together. Men and women are uniquely created and so both share similar traits and cannot continually be in opposition of each other. The phrase “gender binary, refers to the social and theoretical systems which insist and even prescribe that there are two - and only

two - genders, and that these two genders are most usefully defined as being the opposites of each other. Moreover, this system commonly posits the male as the norm, and the female as merely the not-male, the other, or simply the opposite of the norm.

In this study, the examination of this concepts are examined in the texts, focusing on plays where women perform roles previously believed could only be performed by men. It is necessary at this point to clarify what is meant by the term “masculinity” in this analysis. Traditionally, masculinity has meant ‘of’ or ‘characteristic of’ ‘men’ and, when applied to a woman, it means, “having qualities considered appropriate to a man” (Primmer, 1994:73). But as Sedgwick (1995:274) opines that contemporary gender scholars assert that masculinity sometimes has nothing to do with men. The term “masculinity” is not necessarily to be associated with a person, who is biologically male. The attributes dubbed “masculinity” may be expressed by all kinds of bodies. Halberstam (1998:1) equally argues in support of the foregoing that ‘female masculinity is rejected in order that male masculinity may appear to be the real thing’.

However, Osofisan chooses to write about men and women, the underprivileged people in the society, in fact, about everybody, this is because to him, “it is they (rather than a fraction of the masses) that are the vectors of change” (Gbilekaa, 1997:75). He expresses through his plays, a kind of egalitarian society where there will be equal opportunities for all: men, and women, irrespective of status. He, therefore, employs literature as a weapon of social change and of awakening in the people, a sense of liberation and equality of sexes. His works share certain thematic concerns, that of ascertaining the individual struggle for survival through collective determination of both men and women. Ajayi (1996:97) opines that:

The women in *Morountodun* are not one dimensional cardboard characters who exist to serve as defining backdrops for male characters. They are well-developed personalities who are presented in different social facet and human behavioural grid- rich, poor, corrupt, arrogant, brave, dogmatic, angry, compassionate and full of humour.

Osofisan is preoccupied with female matters among other themes. Just like Shakespeare’s portrayal of women in his many different works, Osofisan has a good number of his plays portraying women in various forms. He concentrates on three characteristics



concerning women; he sees some to be liberally minded. Such are the socially conscious ones, who are always eager to accept changes and create room for social justice. They are never radical, but are really committed to allowing justice to reign in the midst of societal exploitation. Osofisan's women provide the 'essential back-up force and support without which the man cannot sustain their armed combat'(Ajayi, 1996 :97).

Some of Osofisan's militant women belong to the poor, less privileged class, whose boldness coupled with their revolutionary acts helps their struggles for social change. There are also the downtrodden market women who are conscious of their oppressive conditions and deprivations and are determined to struggle in conjunction with others (men, and women) to transform their societies. According to Osofisan in Awodiya (1995:117): " The individuals tend to fail – when an individual is trying to change the entire society alone, he will end up being a failure." He further recounts that in the Renaissance era, it was a matter of everyone to himself as Osofisan recounts in Awodiya (1995:117) "The western European has the tendency to individualise himself in the course of protecting himself or herself from imminent hazards of the intemperate environment".

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTED NIGERIAN PLAYS (FEMI OSOFISAN'S AND ZULU SOFOLA'S)

#### 5.0 Introduction

In this chapter, an attempt is made to analyse the selected Nigerian plays with the aim of bringing out some of the features of female masculinity as exhibited by the female protagonists examined. This is to depict the depth of both the male and the female writers' consciousness of the fact that women share equal traits with men.

#### 5.1 Osofisan Femi – his artistic vision and ideology

Femi Osofisan was born on 18th June, 1946. He had his early education at Government College, Ibadan and subsequently, his university education in Nigeria and later, Dakar and Paris. He developed an interest in painting as this later had an effect on his dramatic activities. Osofisan is professor of Drama and Theatre. His achievement as one of the most original and multifarious African writers is confirmed through his numerous published plays, novels, poems, short stories, essays and lots of songs. Just like Shakespeare, Osofisan is a versatile, energetic and committed writer. His drama gives voice to the down-trodden, especially women of the society as he gives life to his characters who, in turn, express their feelings within the society. His drama presents the common and oppressed people who become assertive in their quests to advocate for social change. Each of his drama is energised and full of positive, revolutionary ideologies.

Most of Osofisan's plays fall back on history which has a common storyline with the local history. Osofisan reworks most of these historical facts, myths and legendary past in order to revise, reinterpret and challenge such for the benefit of his contemporaneous age. His drama, for instance, revises history, interprets and equally challenges myths and legends and questions some societal stereotypes as in his *Altine*, *Another Raft*, *Morountodun*, to mention but a few. He tries to reconstruct history, radicalise myths and legend to become appropriate 'vehicles' to bring his ideological vision into reality (Obafemi, 2001: 164). Thus, in Osofisan's drama, the immediate and relevant problems of the society are depicted before the audience. Through this, his drama becomes a means of showing the society's need for change and liberation. Osofisan's dramas seem to see the

solution to society's oppression and intimidation through collective efforts rather than individual actions as it happens in the drama of Shakespeare. Thus, to show this, Osofisan recreates history to show how either men or women have always and can still challenge any act of tyranny or oppression within the society just to allow for equal treatment of both sexes through the collective endeavour of the people. His plays, according to Gbilekaa (1997:75), are full of instances which prompt members of his constituency into taking up arms to undertake a complete overhaul of 'any' structure that oppresses and dehumanises them. In other words, Osofisan, as social critic, does not spare any category of persons in his radical ideology of advocating social change in the society. In his bid to achieve this, he sees his characters not minding the sex, as essential entities that embody his ideology: "the dislodgement of an oppressive and unjust leadership system" (Obafemi, 2001:157).

In appreciating the fact that women are positioned as underprivileged and have been culturally intimidated within the Nigerian society, Osofisan still recognises their ubiquitous power and strengths in exercising some pronounced degree of control and power over their destinies (Awodiya, 1995:20). Though in some of his characterisation of women, as Awodiya (1995:20) reveals, has stereotyped images, such as he refers to some of them as 'heartbreak' while some are linked to the biblical serpent. This is similar to Shakespeare's earlier perception of women in some of his writings, before his later portrayal of militant and strong women within the society. Osofisan also gives a vision of a new and progressive society with militant, masculine women who share equal traits with men. By so doing, he sees the new society where old prejudices crumble, giving way to reconciliation and equality of gender, where women's militant actions become visible and acknowledged.

Awodiya (1995:20) affirms to the fact that Osofisan is a prolific writer; an artist, a poet "with great range and wide variety of production writing among the young generation of Nigerian dramatists". He presents down-to-earth characters with real feelings in his plays and women with diverse roles like Shakespeare. Osofisan's plays are inspired by the culture and social events of his time and others drawn from all over Nigeria though the Yoruba culture forms the socio-cultural context on which they are based in the same way as Shakespeare drew from Roman and Greek plays. He is also a writer with a radical bent, who always advocates a social change and a belief that man's problem can be solved by himself, not by anybody. Osofisan believes like Olatunji in Awodiya (1995:34):

Everyman is born free and equal. That everyman or woman has a right to life and to the means of maintaining it. That inequality is... an evil and a scandal to be actively combated and eradicated from the society.

Osofisan's plays share certain thematic concerns with virtues of different individuals asserting self-power to fight and survive irrespective of whom they are – man or woman. His work is preoccupied with female masculine characters that are concerned with radical, forceful, as well as revolutionary traits. The characters are those who stand firmly in their quest for social change and to assert their masculine will, not minding the outcome. In his work, women share equal status with men and are usually determined to transform people or collaborate with them in the quest for transformation in the society. In most of his drama, Osofisan sees not much hope or achievement in an individual protagonist, but success in collective heroism (Obuh, 2002:23). An evidence of this is shown in *Morountodun* which prominently features women whose commitment to active participation in the cause of the society is as valid and critical to its success as the men who physically take up arms to defend it (Ajayi, 1996:97).

How most of women in his plays portray masculine traits to dethrone and debunk patriarchal subjugation and discrimination under the hegemonic rule of the society of their time shall be examined. Thus, in our analysis of Osofisan's plays, we will highlight the radical stance of the heroines, their rejection of patriarchal marginalisation and intimidation and how his women portray the masculinity in them, deconstructing the established male paradigms of power, toughness and militancy.

## 5.2 Dramatic works of Femi Osofisan

For the sake of brevity, references shall be limited to two drama texts of Femi Osofisan. What one needs to note about this great writer is the fact that he is held in highest esteem in his country, where literary and drama productions are important.

Osofisan is a prolific Nigerian playwright, critic, novelist and poet whose works attack injustice and corruption in the society. He has written many plays, some of which touch on myths, folklores and histories to address some particular themes.

Similarly, Osofisan falls back on past events as most of his plays effectively employ myth, folklore and history to address oppression, despotism, revolt and the likes in the Nigerian society. He employs some range of humours, which are derived basically from the Yoruba experiences, ironies, folktales and fables in his writings. On the issue of humour, Bamidele (1996:76) avers that 'the jester's art in Osofisan reaches a most hilarious level in his style of coining names and epithets for his characters'.

Moreover, Osofisan's plays are frequently staged more than the works of his other contemporaries. Osofisan, like Shakespeare, reworks historical events to serve his contemporary social vision. He shows how unequal powers were challenged in the past even by women, thereby justifies the fact that use of power in any form does not reside with just a sex but in both to achieve justice and equity among people. This is the case with *Morountodun* and *Red is the Freedom Road* where the heroines use their powers to bring sanity to reign even within the then patriarchal society. Osofisan drama favours collective actions as against the individualistic heroism of the Shakespearean drama. For example, in *Morountodun* and *Red is the Freedom Road*, the heroines in both teame-up with the masses to achieve success and freedom unlike the individual heroines in Shakespeare's plays. In contemporary Nigerian society, the principle of togetherness is emphasised over the individualistic approach. Thus, in the analysis of Osofisan's selected plays, radical concept of female heroism will be highlighted.

This concept of heroism in women is what a scholar refers to as the - 'dual nature in a woman'. Estes (1997:135) explicates thus:

If one overlooks at a woman's dual nature and takes a woman at face value, one is in for a big surprise, for when the woman's wildish nature rises from her depths and begins to assert itself, she often has interests, feelings, and ideas which are quite different from those she expressed before.

The above excerpt is culled from Estes' personal ideology as regards the powerful nature of an average woman in the society where Osofisan's ideology of women is based.

### 5.3 Dresscode clue: (disguise/impersonation) in *Morountodun* (MT)

Let me also wear. Such deliberate disguises rats, coat,  
Cow skin, crossed staves in a field behaving as the wind  
behaves.

(T S Eliot -The Hollow Men).

Most of Shakespeare's plays, as mentioned earlier, are seen to have been written to portray real characters with feelings. Similarly, Osofisan sets his stories within real and familiar surroundings in which people's beliefs are easily recognised by those who are accustomed to the terrains within which those stories are situated. Also, some of Osofisan's stories are based on incidences that are much relevant to the socio-cultural order of the Nigerian society. These are stories fashioned out of the cultural practices that obtain where male intimidation and subjugation are the order of the day.

The fact that Osofisan writes about women is quite significant. In some of his writings, his characterisation of women shows that there are naturally two categories of human beings: the bad and the good. The playwright offers the vision of a new and progressive society, where old prejudices give way to transformation, reconciliation and equality among the sexes. Female protagonists in his plays challenge the convention about chauvinistic power of the men to always arrest any situation and refuse to accept the supremacy of men over others in a given situation. Ajayi (1996:97) reiterates the fact that the playwright "pays tribute to, and gives recognition to the silent-behind-the-scene roles that women have always played in national, social, political or economic struggles". He employs disguise as a means of exercising female masculinity similar to Shakespeare's opinion but his women do not engage in cross-dressing in the physical mode but do that psychologically, as in case of Titubi, who does disguise psychologically to become *Morountodun*- a Moremi personified.

*Morountodun*, which literally means 'I have found a sweet thing' (Obuh, 2002:22) or 'I have found something of substance' (Ajayi, (1996:94), is a play based on the Moremi myth. Moremi is a legendary queen of Ile Ife. During one of the internal wars waged against the Yorubas by the Igbos, the queen abandoned her royalty and infiltrated the Igbo camp to seek victory for her people. Similarly, Osofisan recreates this Moremi myth, linking it with the historic 1969 Agbekoya revolt, which involved the Yoruba farmers' protest against the then government's excessive exploitation and connecting it with Titubi.

In *MT*, Titubi, the daughter of Alhaja Kabirat disguises psychologically, as if she were Moremi, and she is unconsciously assuming the name and the status of the renowned Moremi, the legend of Ile Ife, who at one time undertook the missionary journey into the enemy's territory. Titubi sees herself performing similar role of first protecting her class though she later becomes sympathetic to the peasants' oppressive state of being. Her disguise dimension is through the process of 'conscientisation' through which she undergoes a radical change to cast off a self-centered and selfish status. She metamorphoses into an aggressive and manly role in order to support the peasants and repress oppression and intimidation. She undergoes a psychological disguise by gallantly taking a step forcing her way into the arena where men fear to tread in order to crush the peasants' revolt, which leads to fracas in the town. She goes to the market place with hired thugs and the inscriptions on the placards shouting: "Down with Agitators! Wipe out the insane lovers of poverty! crush the peasant revolt" ( 7).

To further exercise the masculinity in her, Titubi, out of curiosity and bravery, goes on an adventure into the peasant farmers' camp volunteering to go and arrest the peasants' leaders through espionage. That is, it requires Titubi engaging in a psychological warfare-fashioned disguise journey, similar to Moremi's, to suppress those warlords in their aggressive states:

**Titubi:** Suppose I do volunteer? Suppose I offer to fight the peasants? I will do it Mama, one woman did it before (26).

As portrayed in the text, Titubi undergoes an ideological transformatory disguise under the assumption of Moremi's integrity and status other than her real self. Ajayi (1996:95) further emphasises this point:

Titubi's projected success on the spy mission is predicated on her sexuality as a female. She is daring but her qualification for the job emphasises not her intelligence, but her personality as a sexual object.

This is very unlike Shakespearean plays where women transvest and transgender before they can go into achieving their aims.

### 5.3.1 Assertiveness clues in *Red*

*Red is the Freedom Road (RED)* portrays a good example of a strong-willed and heroic protagonist who exhibits female masculinity traits inherent in her to achieve what the husband could not. This assertion concurs with what Lindsay and Miescher (2003:53) observe that African women, and in particular Nigerian women, have been known right from the beginning of their existence to occupy a variety of leadership roles in their societies. Women and men have always coexisted to complement their societal needs. In some cases, a system of joint sovereignty exists whereby leadership roles are shared between the leader and his female counterpart. In a system of this kind, women's powerful traits are acknowledged as equally as the men's. So, in the Nigerian society, gender becomes flexible and fluid, allowing women active participation in the progress of the society. This heroic status of women has always been noted as it happens when Ibidun in *Red* takes a bold and assertive decision to gear up her husband, Akanji, to step out boldly and lead other captives to regain their freedom from the oppressive king.

Ibidun tries to incite Akanji, her husband, to militantly set other slaves free from their incarceration. In this play, the playwright appreciates Ibidun's constructive and revolutionary qualities as she is determined to assist the husband in transforming the life of those who have been wickedly captured into slavery by an oppressive king of the clan.

In *RED*, Akanji and all the men are regarded as 'ordinary slaves' in bondage. Since slaves have no freedom, they too have to entertain no thought of being free, until Ibidun, who is endowed with revolutionary qualities, intervenes by spurring the men into fighting their way out of captivity. As this is going on, one of the soldiers disreputably addresses her as slave and instantly, without controversy, Ibidun vehemently fights against the insult meted on her by the soldier. Ibidun defies the hungry-looking faces of the soldiers and fiercely protests the derogatory name "slave-woman". She looks straight into the man's eyes and calls him to order while seeming to doubt Akanji's sanity:

**2<sup>nd</sup> soldier:** You were alone.

**Akanji:** I am not alone but see (gestures towards Ibidun)

**1<sup>st</sup> soldier:** (insulted) That is only a slave, son of thunder, a woman and only a slave.

**2<sup>nd</sup> soldier:** Not a person to be counted where men are speaking.



**Ibidun:** Do you stand there while they say all that to me? Akanji, do you bear insult to your wife?

**Akanji:** (To his wife) Keep quiet! (To soldiers) forgive me....I understand.

**Ibidun:** You understand! Akanji are you well? What has happened to you?... Has Saponno visited my house? Isn't this my husband?...(1.ii.45).

Ibidun knows and sees herself as a real woman and not a slave that would not talk or have any say in the society. She would rather call a spade a spade, not shovel. So, in her troubled state of mind, she believes in the liberal tradition's value of individual freedom and equal civil rights for women as public citizens. Akanji, like any other man, a male chauvinist, may not have been bordered but has only been too jittery and cowardly, not wanting to be associated with his wife. Ibidun, in her masculinity power, openly scolds and disagrees with Akanji's inactiveness and feminine disposition:

So you sell your own people for power? No, I can't believe it! You'll serve a man who lay waste your homeland... Who killed your father? Enslaved your people... for what? ... You are no longer my husband. I could kill myself (119).

At the King's palace, Ibidun's mother in-law is apportioned her own insult of being tortured too as nobody, not even her son, Akanji, is able to save her. Ibidun further demonstrates her masculinity as she never keeps silent when all other slaves do so. The masculine trait in her spurs her to radically reject and denounce the oppressive and tyrannical leadership of the King. It is this action taken by Ibidun that alerts other solders to beware of the impending revolution that would eventually rid their town of all oppression and usher in peace:

**1<sup>st</sup> Soldier:** First, you have the revolution, the revolt, or the coup d'etat. The killing, to end all killings, oppression to punish oppression. Detention to banish detention. And every one prepares for peace.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Soldier:** Yes, darkness will fall (133).

Here, Ibidun calls her husband, a warrior, back to his senses as he promptly saves the situation. The exhibition of female masculinity stems from the fact that Ibidun does not see any difference between herself and Akanji, especially when the problems on ground need to be instantly solved. Prompt actions have to have been taken by Akanji, a warlord, but because the feminine attribute in him overshadows his inherent masculinity traits at the moment, his wife assists in gearing him up. Ibidun is not rude rather she coordinates all the senses in her to save Akanji from the psychological destruction that is imminent from effect of slavery.

Ibidun's action agrees with what Squires (1999:116) calls formal equality, which does not recognise women's reality and experience as different from men's. It denotes that women have the same opportunities in life as men, including the ability to participate in public sphere of influence. Ibidun further recognises the fact that both of them may have different needs and preferences, but at the moment, freedom for all matters and should be taken as a matter of urgency. The rights, opportunities and responsibilities of individuals will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Human beings, men, women, are universal categories with sound reasonings (Nussbaum, (1994: 62). Reason, she says, overcomes the existing forms of power: 'convention and habit are women's enemies, and reason their ally' (1994). Accordingly, Akanji suddenly becomes charged:

(Now mad) Stop! Stop, you'll kill her!  
Enough I say! Idiot, give me that whip,  
and taste it yourself! (136).

Akanji immediately responds to the wife's alarm even though he is not compelled to do so. Such is as effective as an unavoidable influence an average woman may have over her husband. Equality in genders does not mean sameness of action but that each of them has the ability to do similar things, having the same opportunities in life.

Ibidun demonstrates her masculinity when she gallantly rebuffs Akanji when the latter wants to explain all his past hidden inactive actions to her. She wants to handle Akanji and be sure he realises his passivity and behaves properly:

**Akanji:** Wait, Ibidun, wait! I am Akanji, your husband.

**Ibidun:** (slaps him) whose husband? Repeat that only once, and, dear commander not all your forces will save you from my nails (127).

What stresses the idea of female masculinity here is the fact that Ibidun sees herself sharing equal responsibilities with her husband as she warns him not to go further in his explanation of his strange actions towards all the maltreatments meted on them by their captors. It is evident here that women exercise autocratic power, a kind of female supremacy, indirectly to oppress, to orientate anybody, anytime. Ibidun acts mainly based on the belief that women share the same opportunities in life as men, such as the ability to actively feature in the public sphere. This agrees with the liberal feminist idea that this oppressive measure could go a long way in destabilising even a hard-hearted man from making a concrete decision. Akanji advises that Ibidun be taken away to avoid being hurt or beaten by him.

Osofisan does not hesitate to extol the virtues of doggedness, determination and perseverance in any of his characters, irrespective of their sex. In *Red is the Freedom Road*, the playwright cherishes the fact that it is only through determination that social justice can be achieved. Based on this, that Ibidun, the iron lady, is seen to have doggedly held on to her decision not to succumb to the society's hegemonic humiliation or subjugation right from the beginning even at the risk of death. Although in the Nigerian society, women have not been associated with powerful decisions, they wield considerable authority, however subtle. This makes masculinity wielded by women to be highly influential. This is evident in the mother power that Akanji's mother brings to bear on him on her death bed troubles his conscience when he learns that he has lost his mother and the unborn child through his carelessness:

The child is dead! Mother you too. The world is narrow,  
nowhere to hide from pain. ...O mother where are you  
now... My people will you forgive me, when the tale is  
told? ... Give me tonight... one night only and all will be  
well (139).

From the textual analyses of the selected texts, an attempt has been made to use some of the clues of masculine attributes in the protagonists, while blending such with Derrida's deconstruction and Nussbaum's model of liberal/equality feminist theories of modernist emancipatory theoretical approach, believing that texts are flexible and, therefore, subject to as many interpretations as possible.

Through the analyses of the selected texts, various hierarchies displayed have been reconstructed. For instance, we have identified the traditional binary opposition, such as power and powerlessness, masculinity and femininity for women and men. But such notion has been reconstructed in our belief that equal traits are accorded both male and the female, the rich and the poor, 'the haves' and 'the havenots' - men and women everywhere.

From the study of Shakespeare and Osofisan's works, the main concern has been to extend to women the same rights and privileges that men enjoys, by identifying areas of unequal recognition and treatment and eliminating such to allow appropriate reformation and transformation of ideas within the society.

The goal of equality theory as Lister (1997:95) explains has been geared towards gender-neutrality, where women are enabled to participate with men as equal citizens in the public sphere. This is a situation where women's responsibilities and skills in private and public spheres are recognised and valued. A more constructive way forward is a conception of Nussbaum's notion of liberalism that uses the gender-neutral language of 'humanity', 'individual' and 'reason', to bring home its point of equality of gender, while remaining sensitive to the differences that exist between men and women. The studied plays put this concept into consideration, in that the worth of the protagonists alike have been considered as equally useful and effective as the men's. Using the weaponry of equality, the texts are critically and closely read to bring out the various norms, ideal and the traditional beliefs of Western thoughts.

### 5.3.2 **Body language clue in (MT): Use of beauty, courage and determination**

Aesthetics, according to Effiong (2004:102), "is the study of the mind and emotions in relation to the sense of beauty." Aesthetics, therefore, has to do with being beautiful from the psychological perspectives where it concerns the study of mind and emotions. It can be noted that drama has a lot in common with the issue of aesthetics, of beauty. Osofisan values aesthetics in his works, as well as in his heroine, Titubi in *MT*.

Titubi takes a bold step infiltrating the farmers' camp in an attempt to capture their leader – Marshal. She does this by extolling the charming power in her heroic sense of adventure; her virtue cum the effective use of her beauty, courage and determination put together into quelling all the fierce looking warlords at the battlefield and turning the

riotous society into a peaceful one. In Titubi's strong desire to be the modern day Moremi, she uses her beauty, having been encouraged by the role Moremi played with her beauty to capture the militant Igbo warlords. Titubi further believes that her physical appearance would be a trap to bewitch the peasant's mighty warrior without any controversy. Without mincing words, her beauty casts a spell on the mighty man of valour as Marshal confesses:

We have met your parents. We have been to the house from which your manners were furnished. We have grown to cherish you, and that is enough. Therefore, I pluck her from the storehouse of beauty and tenderness, she is the goddess of beauty herself. I name her Morountodun (75).

Very unlike the flirtatious look used by some of the other Shakespearean heroines to entrap men, Titubi's natural beauty coupled with her elegance and virtues cast the spell on her beholders; Marshal and Bogunde. Bogunde seems to be the only one that is able to discern the real beauty of Titubi from its pretentious power. This he does by declaring publicly that people should not try to be influenced by her beauty as general Marshal has already been bewitched; thus, declaring Titubi as the goddess of beauty herself. Bogunde, at first takes Titubi's real beauty as mere supposition and warns that women are cunning and dangerous and could disguise to be beautiful just to achieve their ambitious plans as it happens at the end.

From the foregoing, it could be discovered that women have their unique ways of achieving their objectives and enforcing powers without necessarily going tough as men would. So, without much stress, Titubi is able to quell the fiery fire burning and creating serious tension in the society, when men, like the Superintendent, have been reluctant and jittery to take such bold steps. Titubi eventually uses all her attributes, aesthetics, courage, persistence and determination to suppress both the militant warlords and the aggressive peasants. At the end, the riotous society becomes pacified and peaceful. Definitely, women are heroic and could activate the masculine attributes in them to play prominent roles as shown in the plays examined in the study. Most of these women are naturally endowed with militant and revolutionary traits like men.

Also, Osofisan creates militant, progressive as well as radical women who can stand to challenge any oppression meted on them by the patriarchal society. Some of his women are portrayed as forceful militant characters who stand firmly behind their counterparts to

advocate social change, especially, equal treatment of individuals, irrespective of the gender. Similarly, Shakespeare portrays women with many faces in most of his plays. There are resolute female characters with strong sense of the self. These are the militant women who are unwilling to accept the stereotyped female role of passivity but have crossed over the scale of oppression into the realm of believing as Paechter (2006:254) opines “In the sex, is all the difference, which is but only in the body. For she hath the same reasonable soul and in that there is neither his nor hers, neither excellence nor superiority”.

#### 5.4 **Nigerian female writers and their perceptions of female characters**

Writers generally draw from their milieu, from the past and the present in the course of their writing. This is why writings that involve women in a society usually show the society's perception of women. It is upon this premise that most writings, whether regarding the woman as a writer or the one who has been written about are based. Whatever the perception of a woman by any society, the portrait of a woman and her endless roles have been seen to change from time to time. Though the woman is marginalised as her ascribed roles have been that of house keeping and mothering, an average woman has not been totally dependent on man. She has the ability to engage in other responsibilities either boldly or subtly that could earn her some degree of independence and authority. This means she has equal reasoning faculty to proffer solutions to any problem anytime.

In contemporary times, modern playwrights, especially the female dramatists as members of the society, have the freedom to portray their characters to match their own goals. They can equally desire to create new images for their female characters, such as those that their husbands would depend on their survival without any controversy. There are two images of women as it is with men within the society; that of the weak and docile, the strong and active, the good and the bad, powerful and powerless. As strong men walk the streets, there are strong, dynamic women who transcend the borders imposed on them by patriarchy and gender inequality. The same images abound in the literary world, particularly, drama. It is the combination of the two views - weak and strong - that best portray the real picture of any person as it does of the typical Nigerian woman; the roles she plays and her true colour within the society.

But until now, one tends to agree with Frank (1984) in Adebayo (1996:38):

Until the present moment in fact, African literary studies has been an almost exclusively masculine domain, largely because the scholars and critics who have mapped it out are nearly all men, who have tended to ignore the admittedly small but still significant number of African women writers and women related issues in African literature.

As a result of the above fact and the additional fact presented by Sofola (1986) in Obafemi (2001:158):

In the past traditional set up of Nigeria, men were educated at the expense of the women. Secondly, the women were more burdened with humdrum of daily life than men. And therefore, it takes extra effort on the part of the female to write.

By implication, therefore, the presence of men as regards literary activities is felt all over the continent of which the Nigerian society is not exempted. Writings then become the exclusive right of men as their writings began to portray women in a suppressive manner. Their “pen like the sword was considered as consigned by nature to the hands of men” (Emenyi, 2005:50). Male writings have tried to give negative and stereotypical notions about the roles played by female characters in their texts, that is, if they cared at all to write on them. These male writings have tried to negate the qualities and equalities of female with themselves. Their works have presented women as weak, helpless, docile and politically unwise when compared to the males. The extent to which the above has gone into denying the masculine power of women is confirmed by Blaire (1991) in Evwierhoma (2002:24): “the stereotyping of female roles in male-produced literature has a negative influence on women, as it imposes traditional roles upon them”. Some of these stereotypes as mentioned by Evwierhoma, are ‘the good and evil, the sex object, the seductress, the witch, the underdog, the wife and mother’.

Oftentimes, Nigerian literary writings portray that only few male dramatists endowed their female characters with very strong roles. The dramatists tend to realise the fact that play texts should be created to re-interrogate, re-visit and revise women-related issues and to protest against the age-long notion that females are powerless. Through such texts, it becomes clear that women have powers, both negative and positive, which they can

choose to exercise daily, over men, to resist domination and exploitation. This power could also be used to direct, control and intimidate their subjects.

However, it is the maltreatment of yester years by the men which Culbert (1986) in Adebayo (1996:37) calls 'revolution' that produced a 'generation of Amazons of the pen', who, with the spirit of their predecessors, have set masculine tyranny at defiance (Sofola, 1998:52). It is not surprising when Adebayo (1996:37) opines:

Every African woman who writes must have killed the Angel in the House several times over as well as overcome many prejudices in a society where the woman is supposed to be seen and not be heard.

She posits that the situation described above has not been radically different from what it used to be in the eighties, but there seems to be an improvement in women's participation in writings. She observes that "African women are tearing the veil of invisibility and telling the truth about their own experiences as well as the experiences of women in general" (Adebayo, 1996:37). It is during this modern time that female creativity seeks to give the true picture of woman power which has not been really shown by male writings. This is in consonance with Ekwierhoma's (2002:17) position that :

The few female writers there seem to emphasise women-centred ideologies in their writings. Through their texts, female dignity, femininity, female protestation and feminine aesthetics are upheld.

In essence, when a female writer creates a female character, such could be taken to mean that such represents 'self' as she can define herself using the text while creating the real self within the text from representations of herself and ideals. Female playwrights try to write plays to be acted by both genders to really portray their real powerful status which the society has misrepresented through the writings of men in the past.

Ever since the first Nigerian published female writer finally crossed the hurdles of intimidation, she has to contend with the prejudices of the predominantly male-dominated notions of their literary writings. Hence, most of early female writers create, out of necessity, their own stories, seeing themselves, according to Adebayo (1996:39) as:



Representatives of African (Nigerian) women and correctors of certain well-worn prejudices concerning women. In short, they tell it as it is. This explains the predominance of the sociological orientation of their writings.

Commenting on the need for women to begin to write about themselves to prevent the perpetuation of the male writers' usual tradition, Ekwierhoma (2002:26) admonishes:

Mere participation in creativity is not enough. Women writers should write good plays to alter the negative portrayal of women where possible. Female audience should be at one with the work they encounter. Women must write about women and bring them back to the writing from which they have been driven away.

In other words, Nigerian female writers, like other female writers in West Africa, have proceeded and succeeded. " In rendering the invisible visible in breaking out the chrysalis of patriarchy to discover what is contained in their new visions of telling the world that they are seeking self identity against stereotypes unveiled in such writings of theirs" Adebayo (1996:39). In applying gender concept of equality mixed with that of deconstruction to the discourse, therefore, there is the need to consider how the female playwright chosen portrays the issues of female power and masculinity in her selected plays.

However, the framework of any literary work will not be a good one if it has not been directly relevant to the normal world, and if it has not reflected the reality of life as lived in the past. An attempt shall be made to consider some biographical information about the writer as relates to her texts. This becomes necessary as Bamidele (2000:72) posits that any literary work of art is a social reflector of the time it is written. He claims further that such artistic work, a social chronicle, portrays the social events or conditions of the prevailing time of its creation.

### 5.5 **Zulu Sofola: her biography**

Zulu Sofola is the first prominent, published Nigerian female playwright. She was born into the royal family of Okumabua in Isele-Ukwu Aniocha, now Delta State, Nigeria in 1935. After various stages of schooling, Zulu Sofola received a PhD at the University of Ibadan, Oyo State, in 1977. She later became the first African woman Professor of Theatre

Arts. A woman of talent and a dynamic achiever, Sofola became widely acknowledged as the pioneer female dramatist in Nigeria. In so doing, she established herself a 'matriarch' of Nigerian theatre by becoming a distinct female voice in the performing arts world. As a pacesetter in dramatic literary works in Nigeria, she strove to be in the forefront of the quest for African women's empowerment. Her life and works, according to Kolawole (1996:6), raise certain issues for appropriate contemporary theories about African women. This hinges mostly on self-assertion. Sofola defies the general claim and notion that women generally are powerless, voiceless and mute. Through her giant strides, and in her quest for women's self-awareness and self-esteem, she creates a significant mark on gender ideology through her dramatic creativity (Kolawole, 1996:7).

Kolawole further attests to the fact that Sofola is a pathfinder in a male-dominated discipline as she investigates African values that affect women and expresses her desire for women's self-definition in the society.

#### 5.5.1 Her works

Zulu Sofola has the following published plays to her credit among others: *The Disturbed Peace of Christmas* (1971), *Wedlock of the Gods* (1972), *King Emene* (1974), *The Wizard of Law* (1975), *The Sweet Trap* (1977), *Old Wines Are Tasty* (1981), and *Memories of the Moonlight* (1986). She has about twenty (20) plays on the whole (published and unpublished). Her other staged and television productions include; *The Operators*, *Lost Dreams*, *Queen Omu-Ako of Oligbo* and *The Showers*.

Although Sofola was a pacesetter and a pathfinder in a male-dominated world, she never had most of her literary products, where she handled radical women issues, published but performed. Hence, Obafemi (2001:159) advises that critical appraisal of her works must be mindful of the indivisible intertextuality (of the literary product and performance texts) of her theatrical enterprise. He further submits that in spite of Sofola's relatively late emergence as a dramatist of note, she belongs to a remarkable extent, with both the first and the second generations of Nigerian dramatists of English expression both in terms of chronology and dramatic vision. He equally posits that Sofola's vision grounded her more on her abiding conviction of the inviolability of cultural and traditional

paradigms. Also, she does not hesitate to hack down whoever defies and rebels against traditional codes and ethics either through social or marital obligations (Obafemi,1994: 60).

Obafemi asserts that Sofola has two mutually inclusive critical approaches to her theatre - a traditionalist aesthetic perspective and a feminist perspective. In the traditional perspective, Sofola resorts to plays manifesting African beliefs which, in most cases, are static but rely heavily on myth, ritual and traditional settings (Obafemi, 2001:159).

Some critics establish the central issues relating to women in Sofola's plays, such as Ogowoma's forced marriage and other issues relating to women's freedom, in which Sofola in Obafemi (1994:62) comments "I feel that one should do whatever one is committed to do, but once you disturb whatever is there, the repercussions will crush you". In his own defence, Obafemi concludes (1994) that the pervading ideology in Sofola's theatre is the ideology of conformity within which the issues of the status of women in the society and within the traditional order are circumscribed. Obafemi (1994:63) refers to such ideology as Sofola's static feminist ideology saying, 'the dramatist makes the audience uncomfortable and encourages them to see that something is done to change it'. He concludes that the pervading ideology in Sofola's theatre is the ideology of which the issues of status of woman in the society and the cosmic harmony within the traditional order are circumscribed.

To further establish Sofola's radical vision where women are concerned, Emenyi (2005:52) writes on why Sofola bemoans the Western education which to her has dewomanised African womanhood thus:

The western educated African women of the new order (have been made) ineffective, always timidly and indecisively stepping behind the men and periodically making weak scratches at issues of importance.

Sofola's thesis is that African women are not weak because African traditional societies have male and female lines of authority (Emenyi, 2005:52). Therefore, Sofola does not accept the concept of patriarchy where men exercise strict dominance over women, but rather, that everybody - men and women - should have roles and positions to fill within the society. She postulates that that should be done with due respect for the tradition of the land. This point, Sofola affirms further that the roles were so clearly defined within the society and each person so jealously upheld the status quo and that everyone knew his or her place

and stayed there. But all the same, she believes that though roles are clearly demarcated, it does not mean that gender attributes are differently apportioned to different sexes. For example, in one of the interviews in *Their Own Voices* (1990:150) quoted in Obafemi (1994:166) Sofola is quoted as saying:

Recently someone was telling me that a woman can never be an Oba... so I replied that was true: the other side of the coin is that the Oba can never be Iyalode, the Obi can never be an Omu.

The implication of the above is that there are roles to be performed by each individual within the society as each has equal ability to perform his or her role. Each is equally important filling the place to be filled, unhindered. Therefore, Sofola believes that equality exists among different people - men and women - arising out of mutual respect for each other. It is this equality that recognises that women and men have different needs and interests, and preferences and that equality may bring about different handlings or treatments of men and women within the society.

In most of her plays and in order to justify her stand, she sees the need to justify her ideology by creating healthy female characterisation. She saddles herself with the responsibility of authenticating female experiences. Her creativity, which becomes one of the means of softening the hard patriarchal attitudes against women, becomes a case note for revealing how women exhibit some degree of radical traits that oppress men. In Nigeria, women are seen as forces to be reckoned with, as they are actively involved in public affairs; political, economic, religious, social and domestic activities. Yawa, (1995:5) affirms that women are at the heart of development as they control most of the non monetary economy (subsistence, agriculture, bearing children, domestic labour etc. and play an important role in the monetary economy (trading, wage labour, employment). He submits further:

The woman as a person is an agent of reproduction of life itself. This places her in the position of the life blood of the entire humanity. She is the first teacher, the sustainer and maintainer of the home, the peace maker, the symbol of beauty and major moulder of the character of the child. She is a mother of the human race. As mothers and wives, women do exert considerable impact on the productivity of male workers.

Jeminiwa (1995:10) also surmises that by their sheer psychological, physiological and intellectual make-ups, women do perform more than mere complimentary roles in the production process. In most of these affairs, they are either seen as decision-makers or consultants before any decisions are made. As women were active in pre-colonial, they are as well powerful and dominant in Nigerian society of today. Okorounmu (2009:11) avers: “women indeed have more power to promote good governance in society. Very often, they exercise enormous influence on men and control their decisions and actions... thus a man is more likely to be a political activist, if the inclination is endorsed or encouraged by his wife or girlfriend whose esteem he values”.

Furthermore, Olasupo (2010:43) confirms that there is gender balance - a kind of gender parity in existence in public and political administration in some parts of the country where there are dual-rulership.

According to Olasupo (2010:43), women could do everything that men do and that the female gender could produce better results as monarchs. This is further buttressed by Afonja (1996: 8) that Nigerian women participated in politics and government through the institution of women chiefs, the authority of first born daughters and the age grades and held important positions among the majority of ethnic groups, particularly among the Hausa, the Yoruba and the Igbo. Meanwhile, Afonja claims that it is the advent of colonialism that disturbed the functioning of these traditional institutions, suppressing them and imposing alien systems through education, religion and other socio-cultural institutions. In spite of the imposed constraints on the Nigerian women, there is overwhelming evidence that they are formidable productive force and a store of incredibly human resources whose masculine attributes are undeniable. They can dictate the pace and direction of the economy and society. Their sheer numerical strength is enough to jolt cynics. Their contribution cannot be discountenanced in both the household and national economies. Sofola views gender oppression as a social problem. She however, addresses gender disparity or oppression rooted in tradition by teaching traditional customs to her audience and readers about what to change within traditional practices. It is like a case of a physician healing himself. To Sofola, the issue of reconstructing the image of women in a male dominated society to enable them struggle for liberation is not the main concern. Sofola, in an interview with Adeola cited in Obafemi (1996:162) declares:

I have always said that the only way that the African woman of today can be liberated, is to study the traditional system and the place of women as defined by it. There was no area of human endeavour in the traditional system where the woman did not have a role to play.

Sofola does not agree with what others call women oppression as such; rather, she tries to show that women have roles and abilities commensurate with men's. An attempt at playing such roles should not be made by disturbing and disrupting the moral pattern of the society. The African, as Sofola writes in "*The Artist and the Tragedy of a Nation*", sees the society as an organic, holistic reality whose existence and survival can be achieved only through positive, harmonious social organisation in which all the members are relevant and effective (Emenyi, 2005:74). This is achieved by giving respect and honour to whoever deserves such for the mutual existence of all.

In this regard, she focuses on traditionalist approach which recognises and takes cognisance of tradition as initial step at confronting gender oppression that may arise out of their mutual respect for each other and affirmation of each other in their differences. This difference comes to mean not otherness, but specificity, variation, heterogeneity (Young, 1990:171).

It is viewed here that Sofola's idea could be regarded as womanist concept as perceived by Hudson-Weems (1994:6) :

African womanism is for women of African roots and descent, thus it foregrounds African mores and culture, which do not see the male as a foe, but an equal participant in the struggle.

Sofola, therefore, maintains that women are as important as men and they are perceived as having and, sharing similar traits. It is such a belief that recognises that women and men have different needs, preferences and interests and that the resultant effect may necessitate different treatment of men and women. This does not believe the equality traits inherent in both sexes. Sofola's belief, notwithstanding, she respects and recognises the tradition of the people which she does not see as being age-old tradition. Rather, she sees it as being the moral strength of the society, which should not, at anytime, be disturbed.

The above insight really paves way for the new set of female writers who launch into writing about women and of women. Female characters began to take up radical parts in

plays in spite of their educational attainment. However, there would be the need to justify the choice of Sofola as one of the women dramatists who appreciates women's masculine traits, in spite of the fact that her ideology is believed to be traditionally inclined.

### 5.5.2 Justification for choosing Zulu Sofola

Zulu Sofola is the first published woman dramatist who “thrusts into a male-dominated domain, making a tremendous impact in spite of the telling restraints, which face her sex, in the writing arena” (Obafemi, 2001:158). The first crop of writers between independence and the civil war faced some challenges, especially most of the few female playwrights of the early 70s among whom is Sofola who declares in Obafemi (2001:158) :

Whatever a woman achieves in her discipline or profession, she achieves it against plenty of odds because a woman's life is more burdened and confused... in the past traditional set up of Nigeria, men were educated at the expense of the women. Secondly, the women are more burdened with the humdrum of daily life than men... And therefore it takes extra effort on the part of the female to write.

Going by the above information and considering the political context in which Sofola began to write and publish some of her writings, especially her early works, one of which is *Wedlock of the Gods*, there are reasons behind what some critics denote as “ambiguous, static and idealistic writing”, restricted to the representation of traditional values’ (Dunton, 2002: 105). The above point is further expressed in Olaghere (2007:6):

From 1966 to 1999, military dictators ruled Nigeria. *Wedlock of the Gods* was published in 1972. Any overt, critical indictments of the status quo (probably of patriarchal ideology) and recommendations for change, most likely would have warranted censorship and political persecution or even death.

In other words, Sofola should be remembered among a generation of writers and playwrights across the African continent that faced persecution and censorship from the then governments, which would not concede to what is believed to be any rebellious writings, by any of the writers, against the government. So, old writers would need to think thoroughly

on how to write what, and when, because their writings were under strict censorship. There was a case of one of the writers, Ken Saro-Wiwa, who was executed because of the social activism that was usually represented through his literary writings and of which the power that he then felt intimidated about.

Aside the aforementioned issues of censorship and hard persecution of the writers, most of the writers, according to Ekwierhoma (2002:121):

Must align themselves with the people in their struggle for freedom and quest for a new society ...for the writer is a register of social change and therefore is shaped by history. The committed writer is a historical being and entity which speaks through texts to his/her people.

She explains further:

On the political plane, the kind of commitment which the writer reveals, is one that connects him as a citizen to the political integrity of the society. The dramatic output of such a writer is therefore seen in relation to the political realities of his time which directly or indirectly bear on its plays.

From the foregoing, Sofola is therefore seen as a freedom fighter, a pacesetter and a feminist in disguise, right from the beginning of her career. Her politically affected ideology plays a significant role in her ambiguous writings, unlike some other female writers whose writing career began almost a decade after she began to write. It is easy to attribute these 'ambiguous' writings to the high handedness and strict surveillance, coupled with fear, which the few writers who deigned to do so then were subjected to. This informs better on the latter ideological position of this playwright as shown in most of her latter plays; *Sweet Trap*, *The Ivory Tower*, *The Showers*, *Queen Omu-Ako of Oligbo*, *Lost Dreams*, and others, where women exhibit masculine traits.

From the above, one could see that Sofola must have acquired what Obafemi (2001:158) refers to as 'supernatural' and extra effort climbing off the traditional backseat of women to steer the wheel of literary creativity in Nigeria. It is this gallant stride that informs other generation of female writers' radical representation of women of this new generation. In spite of the tight situations she found herself and for the fact that most of her plays advocate a change through tradition, Sofola argues against the influences of westernisation on the society's customs and values. She prefers confronting the customs



using the tradition than using Western ideology. She could not fathom a situation whereby foreigners (those who brought Western education) would begin to proffer solutions to amending the traditional values and mores they knew nothing about. So, to her, whatever is found faulty about the tradition of the land should be amended or changed through the same course-tradition not Western ideology. Sofola is categorised as belonging to the first generation of Nigerian dramatist. Just as Obafemi (2001:159) further postulates:

In spite of her relatively late emergence as a dramatist of note, Sofola belongs with the first generation of Nigerian dramatists of English expression, both in terms of chronological and in terms of dramatic vision, hers being a vision grounded more on her abiding conviction of the inviolability of cultural and traditional paradigms.

Obafemi (2001) however, confesses that there are two mutually inclusive approaches to her theatre - the traditionalist and the feminist perspectives. This proves that Sofola's unique dramatic vision cuts across the second generation of writers. Ekwierhoma (2002:9) corroborates this fact that some writers of note span both generations of writing since their works appear in the first and second periods of literary activity. The point remains that such writers write to address definite female audiences in their various societies. They equally write to enable their works exist alongside their male counterparts' works, as well as satisfy the desires of their female audiences.

Olaghere (2007:5) explicates further:

Sofola advocated change through tradition in an effort to cast out westernized notions of change that deteriorated or nullified traditions of the past without a proper examination and understanding of those traditions.

Sofola's position is that tradition needs the chance to change and develop its customs to the contemporary signs of times, being ushered in by the zealous new generation of social activists and writers. Thus, through all her earlier plays, like *Wedlock of the Gods*, and *King Emene* where the heroines are portrayed as victims of patriarchal societies, she only (does that in an effort to) communicates a community consciousness about change through tradition. 'Sofola lays the foundation for social protest literature aimed at confronting gender oppression and raises awareness about the status of women and traditional (Nigerian) practices that needed reformation' (Olaghere 2007:10).

There is an understanding of the point that Sofola uses history; that is, the past, to inform the present and to illustrate that “consciousness of the bad was an essential prerequisite of the promotion of good” (Olaghere, 2007:49). The bad here nonetheless represents the past subjugations the society placed on womenfolk, while the ‘good’ could as well mean the issue of equality and peaceful co-existence between genders. This is equally supported by Akinwale (1989) in Obafemi (2001:160) that “the continuity of the past, the present and the future is a sole determinant of the relevance of her plays based on the traditional society”. He reiterates further that in terms of dramaturgy, writings which are based on the traditional society, if properly diagenised, examined people’s plights, struggles, beliefs and social matters which are quite relevant to contemporary society. He explicates that: “if the the past and the present are but one continuum, if the past can be used to examine the present so as to make projections into the future, then these plays serve a very relevant purpose’.

In essence, all her unique and controversial plays, where the heroines tend to be powerfully humiliated, is about launching into the world of developing critical thinking about diverse ways of using unique tradition to solving critical problems and not to give such a kind of outright nullification.

There is a more systematic engagement with the portrayal of woman in Sofola’s drama as Olaniyan in Obafemi (2001:160) establishes the fact that there is the centrality of the woman question in some of her controversial plays such as in *King Emene* and *The Sweet Trap* where issues on patriarchal oppression of women and women empowerment are raised.

In summary, Sofola takes tradition and uses it against itself to prepare women writers, with their appropriate knowledge in creativity, to challenge and transform the patriarchal society, starting with the old system. With the submissions above, Sofola has the same goals as her literary cohorts of younger generation, but only that she encourages a different ideology on how to tailor other contemporary writers toward that goal. Her ideological stance is summed up in Emenyi (2005:114):

The fact which is almost marred by the rhetoric of commitment is that African women should assert within African values... positive self-assertion is indigenous to African women even though this has been affected in many ways by western influences.

Olaghere (2007:5) corroborates the above:

As Nigeria's first prominent female playwright, Sofola laid the foundation for social protest literature aimed at confronting gender oppressions. The goal with this approach was to maintain the constructive means of the past and fuse them with the needs of the present and future.

### 5.5.3 Assertiveness clue in *Wedlock of the Gods (WED)*

In *WED*, Sofola tries to present her female protagonist, Ogwoma, as a powerful woman who raises up her head to challenge the patriarchal oppression meted on women by the society of her time. Ogwoma becomes a lone voice crying in the wilderness of socio-cultural intimidation, the only one out of many who defies the notion that women are voiceless and mute. Ogwoma opposes the mother's fearful disposition, she challenges this beastly norm, letting the mother know that she does not imbibe the idea of an arranged marriage which seeks to dwarf her being. She is also conscious of the adverse impact of such a tradition. By confronting the mother, she is also able to get to the father. This way, she accuses them of merchandising consciousness. It is this, according to her, that informs their action of giving her away to Adigwu, while undermining and discounting her unmistakable love for the young Uloko, who remains her true love.

It is this commendable audacity on the part of Ogwoma that would make her father, Ibekwe, admit thus: "I gave my daughter away against my wish and hers to the man from whom I could get enough money to add to what I had to save my son's life". Sofola subscribes to Derrida's deconstructive theory by trying to deemphasise the fact which has been overlooked or suppressed in a particular set of communal doctrines. Hence, amidst oppressions and rejections, Ogwoma speaks loudly against the tradition that is about to suppress her. Before now, Ogwoma is forced by her parents to marry an older and wealthier (suitor) Adigwu to enable her family secure a bride wealth to cater for her brother's medical expenses. Through this forced wedlock, Ogwoma becomes sad as her failure to react to such intimidating policy will make her become sad and be entangled with a man she never liked in an unhappy marriage. But as fate would have it, Adigwu dies and Ogwoma is freed of her unhappy matrimonial entanglement.

Ogwoma has to obey the traditional set-up of her society by mourning her late husband for, at least, three months under closed doors and, thereafter, be inherited by the late husband's brother. As a result of the innate masculine traits in her and in agreements with Nussbaum's opinion that reason generates the capacity to be an individual, since it gives the freedom to choose rather than having to be told what to do, Ogwoma boldly challenges and questions this oppressive aspect of the tradition of the land. Here, she holds to the fact that human beings, whether male or female, have equal traits and abilities to reason as it becomes the means to argue for appropriate entry into 'humanity' and the means to rights, justice and social fairness as well to choose whatever seems best. She is pregnant within her second month of mourning. By this simple act, Ogwoma does what others have never or could not have done; that is, to put the traditional system of the land to query as she seems to have broken the taboos of the land.

In Ogwoma's masculinity, she confronts that 'marginal social space' and defies the tradition that hinders her self-realisation of gender equality. She becomes apparently fearless, brave and rebellious, more so that the mysterious death of Adigwu might have been caused by his unfaithfulness to his spouse as probably guessed by Akinwale (1989:70); "if Adigwu died of a swollen stomach, then, it is either Ogwoma has committed adultery or Adigwu himself has committed adultery". Ogwoma's admittance to have been subjected to any patriarchal and unlawful period of mourning must have confirmed and justified her of being the eering partner. Hence, she honestly stands up to her ideology of not being subjected to unnecessary subjugation more than having been coaxed into an unhappy wedlock.

Despite the fact that the principle of conformity and submission to capricious intents of ancestry and inviolable tradition, according to Obafemi (2001:165), won as the couple die, inevitably, yet Ogwoma's assertive trait challenges and registers her gallant stand against and rejection of gender inequality in her community. Ogwoma's militant masculinist character proves perhaps that she foresees the dual enemies' networking activities trying to intimidate and oppress an average woman in a patriarchal society. The first enemy is the tradition of the land which never smiles at an average woman within the patriarchal community. The second is the harsh influences of gender disparity, which still hinges on socio cultural stereotypes held against women who are believed to be weak,

voiceless and should be submissive even in the face of maltreatment. Sofola shows that an average woman is equally gifted in terms of traits as her counterpart. She therefore, uses deconstructive arguments to expose and critique the suppression and marginalisation of things associated with women as represented.

Ogwoma asserts her masculinity further in that, instead of lamenting her marginalisation as Kolawole (2001:4) states it, she twists her marginalised situation into a liberated one by asserting:

**Ogwoma:** (To Anwasia); No, Anwasia, I could not have waited for another day to pass before letting him in. I was not going to wait for another blink of the eye this time. Do you understand?

**Anwasia:** Ogwoma, is it a sign of good sense to look dry-eyed, and clear-faced after such a forbidden act? No matter how much a woman loves a man, the gods forbid what you have done.....This pregnancy is not a good thing. (1.ii.34)

In her resolute bid to exercise that lasting masculinity in her, Ogwoma has this to say:

You do not understand how my heart beats because you were not tied like a goat and whipped along the road to a man you hated.... I prayed for the past three years for my gods to deliver me from this marriage. My prayers were answered and nothing can stop me this time. Let the moon turn into blood, let the rain turn into fire, Ogwoma loves and Ogwoma will do it again! (10)

Ogwoma's boldness in contravening the societal tradition of observing some months in widowhood and thereafter, allowing her brother-in-law to marry her is enough evidence of the assertive exhibition of her female masculinity. It has earlier on been argued that the concepts of masculinity or femininity are rooted in the socio-cultural beliefs of a society and not biological. An individual is associated with the meanings given to such behavioural patterns which the society approves of him or her, not minding the biological sex of the person who exhibits such. For instance, a female, being socially influenced by the shared cultural conceptions of her society may view herself as somewhat masculine fashioned, thereby associating with masculine traits of being rational, dominant and having other variables that have come to be ascribed with masculinity.

Similarly, a man might come to perceive himself as being more feminine than what his society expects. The point is that both genders share equal traits which could be put into practice at any point in time, but these are subject to the society's approval and expectations.

Ogwoma is conscious of this trait embedded in her and thus, openly activates her masculinity dimension by boldly kicking against the dictates of her society.

Sofola's legacy as the first female playwright who invaded a male dominated field (genre), as a dramatist and a director, disrupts the monologic discourses of male playwrights like Soyinka, Osofisan, Clark and others who, all the while, have taken over literary writings in Nigeria. She equally portrays and deposits powerful women on her literary productions. As a woman who writes about women in her drama, she acknowledges the power of courageous women in her plays, like *WED* and staged play *SHO*, where she raises an alarm and confronts the exploitation of women as represented in the militant protagonists.

Sofola reveals in *The Artist* and *The Tragedy of a Nation* that her sole concern is with her nation's 'predicament as a developing nation' whose national destiny is threatened (Emenyi, 2005:90). Sofola acquired the supernatural and extra effort climbing off the traditional backseat of women to steer the wheel of creative productivity, this supernatural effort in her is what she tries to display in a higher commitment through Obinna, in *The Showers*. In the play, she seems to have crossed the carpet from the field of "a cultural apostle", a traditionalist in her earlier plays to "a gender ideologist, paving way for women empowerment in *The Showers*. In the *SHO*, according to Emenyi (2005:96), she adopts an overt womanist point of view as it becomes a dramatisation of gender conflict due to the negligence women receive in the society, especially, from their husbands and daughters from the fathers.

Initially, Sofola holds on to the intimidating parts of tradition which allows for all round supremacy of men over the women. But her belief in the 'supreme creator who had created man and woman in HIS OWN IMAGE' gives her a new outlook. That of the fact that psyche which is the element that makes all human beings equal, in essence, is genderless. This is shown in the Igbo idea of 'Mo Ndu' and the Yorubas' concept of 'Emi' (Rex, 1992) quoted by Emenyi (2005:96).

#### 5.5.4 Assertiveness as clue to displaying female masculinity (persistence, control and coercion) in *The Showers* (SHO)

In *SHO*, the supremacy of one gender over the other is jettisoned or scorned as the play tends to affirm the fact that women share equal power with the men by giving a strong and effective voice to her female characters. A situation in the past, where females have been believed and taken to be docile, devilish and ineffective as well as powerless is just like destroying humanity as well as not being honest with ourselves as regards females' dual natured and unequal power. Therefore, in *SHO*, the playwright seems to re-inscribe her story:

As no bird can fly effectively, if at all with one wing, so also it is that a Nation cannot grow and develop effectively with only one wing. In other words, Nigeria will be engaging in self-destruction if she continues to perpetrate the exploitation of her female population. (1.iii.22)

The above, from Emenyi (2005:101) is taken from the director's note to the premiere of *The Showers*. According to Emenyi(2005), *SHO* is both a protest to sensitise the masses on the need to avert any impending crisis and also an expose on female exploitation and the need for women to reject that.

However, within the larger framework, the play shows a vivid picture of the hazards women go through and the attendant militant reactions they take in return. This is evident in the conversation between some of the sampled female characters before the protagonist, Obinna, intervenes:

**Dr. Essien:** I am sure that if men were to lay down their lives on the line for new life to be ushered into this world the way women have to undergo dangerous function, all services would have been at their beck and call. Is it not more exciting to get a new wife rather than save a used one?

**Dr. Okezie:** Must everything be seen through the lenses of gender warfare?

**Essien:** There is no war; it is only a chat. (103)

This dialogue ensues when a pregnant woman, Mrs Adelaken, is brought to the hospital in a coma resulting from prolonged labour in her husband's absence. The

interaction between the medical personnel and Mr. Adebekun confirms that he abandons his wife during labour. Dr. Essien, a woman doctor, never could hide her inner feelings, but lashes at Mr. Adelaken and other men present at the hospital (delivery) site saying; “I was not going to wait for another blink of the eye this time. Do you understand?” *SHO* portrays another militant woman, Sarah, through utterances, commenting loudly on how irresponsible Mr. Oteri, her husband is when she is going into a coma. Sarah (rushes in from outside seeking information on Mrs. Oteri (another emergency case is rushed into Theatre, from the medical workers). It is Sarah who happens to be a co wife to the other woman that cries loudly for the personnels’ attention thus:

I beg... O...No.... my mate no die..., our husband no killam. When I go market na you dey look my pickin. Oteri you be husband wey bring death. My mate no go die.

(13).

Sarah is ignored by those she is addressing because they think that she is insane. Often than not, when a woman at anytime comes out in her true colour or temperament to debunk and belie the age long stereotyped notions the society holds about her, according to Hamilton in Emenyi (2005:106); “such society will often define as mad those whose speech and actions do not conform to the standards and conventions of acceptable messages and modes of behaviour”. Those who, at such a time, become conscious and challenge what has become societal stereotypes are often stigmatised as it happens to Sarah here.

#### 5.5.5 Assertiveness clue in the *Showers (SHO)*

In Nigeria, marriage in whatever form, is a holy union between man and woman, as well as a social obligation which deserves a proper handling by all the parties involved. These are the girl, the boy who are the would be couple, with their parents. For a peaceful living, the parties involved directly should be adequately carried along with the activities of their wedding plans, the bride to be, should be in the know of things to expect from the aspiring husband. But in any society where love is perceived as what Acholonu (1995:120) calls ‘the living myth’ it is still very much of a tradition which is exploited by some fathers.

In *SHO*, it is never to be so as lots of intimidating stages are carried out to oppress the protagonist, Obinna, who is intimidated for no just reason. Obinna puts the



enlightenment concept of an autonomous rational being' and equality associated with the ability to reason. (Gunew, 1990: 17) to challenge men's unreasonable acts of 'selling' their daughters just to enrich their purses. Mr. Chukwuma, one of the old school materialists who feel that daughters are sources of wealth without being responsible for the daughters' upkeep gets the insult of his life as Obinna openly decries the barbaric action thus:

I watched him give out three sisters virtually to the highest bidders without as much as a spoon accompanying any of them to their new homes. He shamelessly banked the thousands and was loudly heard to boast of his riches. He will not add me to the number ( 5).

What triggers the assertive tendency in Obinna is as Emenyi (2005:103) puts it "the knowledge of what the tradition says, the gait with which this situation is brought home to her experience and the innate will, the inborn tendencies to bring her father to face reality and to be cautious". Olaghere (2007:2) submits:

Sofola's aims of female empowerment was a goal geared toward a synthesis of constructive components of traditional value and the influences of westernisation... The goal was to maintain the constructive means of the past and fuse them with the needs of the present and future (current signs of time).

Obinna is portrayed as a woman, individual subject, an active agent of change – especially personal change. Personal individual change which flows on to a collective result. In her rather traditional reiteration of liberal conceptions of power and justice, the self, empowered/emancipated individual woman can alter the patriarchal power of the relations to achieve freedom for the girl child within her community in consonance with Nussbaum's liberal feminism's ideology of universal standards of humanity, equality and reason which asserts equality and liberty for all. Obinna specifically locates her 'masculine power' as an extension of the liberal feminism of the nineteenth-century thinker. She is little concerned with class or money but appears primarily focused on the problems of women, spinsters and the girl child like herself

To Emenyi (2005:109), Obinna knows what tradition says, so, she refuses to be a prey in the hands of Mr. Chukwura and his family. Obinna boldly challenges men and scolds them, as it were, for being greedy, as well as contravening what the tradition of the

land wants. She does this and thereby saves herself from patriarchal intimidation as well as orientates others not to give in to being submerged into subjugatory roles the society places before them. Obinna's active and strong characteristic traits coupled with her assertive utterances earned her the ability to rescue herself and other sisters from these stereotypical notions. Obinna blatantly condemns the exploitative power already conferred on men by the patriarchal society.

#### 5.5.6 **Voiced act as clue to displaying female masculinity (persuasion and loud voice) in *The Showers***

Obinna rejects all attempts at dissuading her from verbally taking constructive actions against her father thus:

**Dr. Daodu:** What do you really want?

**Obinna:** I want the (bride-price) to be used to buy the items they were meant for... ..I must see that the money is spent to buy what I need to start my new home. (*The Showers*, 5)

Obinna explains the differences between the charged bride wealth and the expected bride price. The locally charged price on each daughter is indirectly charged as 'bride price', is the unlawful 'bride wealth', which in principle suffices enough for couples to equip their homes after marriages. So, in her same bold decision, she rejects the father's intimidating practice:

The marriage money is a token sum not usually more than ₦200.00 to be shared among parents and members of the extended family... The dazzling bulk of the money now referred to as bride price is actually the money provided by the groom with which to furnish the new bride with the basics for her new state of life. (p65)

Obinna, in her fury, calls such fathers 'heartless fathers', calculates every penny and insists on their, as it were, "pounds of flesh". Obinna seems to know what the tradition states, and will not keep mute and allow herself be cheated or oppressed by the egocentric oppressors who claim to be fathers. For the fact that eligible daughters are only married off to the best bidders who can pay the bride wealth than suitable suitors, she questions this terrible habit and refers to it as:

The hawk that carries away the earth is a bad hawk. What does a family get if the daughter is sold to an old man, a highest bidder, and there are no young men with high economic power to purchase them? (p45)

Obinna exercises her masculinity to question the oppressive tradition and refute her sisters' fate. She does this openly due to what Okereke (1998:138) accredits to "intellectual, social and economic expansion achieved through formal education". Obinna with loud voice and "stubborn aggression" demands a better treatment as she advises her uncle, Dr. Okezie:

**Obinna:** Uncle, make sure that I have my traditional Bridal Shower well displayed in a most grand traditional style or there will be anarchy in the family household (leaves with a stubborn aggression (p.7).

In that awareness, Obinna has this to say: "If as an informed adult daughter of our family. I cannot make my position known then I must make my exit"(p.22). Her awareness of equally shared traits, the self consciousness and the assertive tendency in her enables her and compels him to give her an impressive wedding. Obinna thus, fits perfectly into the group of what Aido (1997:39) calls a descendant from some of the bravest, most independent, and most innovative women this world has ever known.

Sofola's *The Showers* debunks the privileging of one gender over the other and gives voice to female characters, thereby confirming the fact that women too exercise the masculinity traits in them, even within a male centred world. Obinna takes her stand in consonance with Nkiruka's (2011:4) submission that says; "to be masculine inclined is to have the self confidence and be able to claim your basic right that is, the right to operate independently of others and to feel free". A masculinist would be able to claim the right to belong to her society in any way that pleases her. Obinna acts to exercise or activate her masculinity before the patriarchal society that intends to submerge and silence her.

Nigerian female writers, through their writings, seem to hold on to the fact that though females like the men share similar traits as natural gifts, women believe in partnership with their men at achieving success. Therefore, Nigerian female writers take sides with Alice Walker's womanist ideology as quoted by Sotunsa (2008:18); a womanist is:

A black feminist or feminist of color... A woman who loves otherwomen, sexually and/or non sexually. Sometimes love individual men, and/or non-sexually, committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not a separatist, except periodically for health... Loves struggle... Regardless: Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender.

Similarly, Hudson-Weems (1994:24) calls this Nigerian female writers' ideology a kind of Africana-womanism, which to her is grounded in African culture and focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs and desires of African women. She opines, as well, that "the Africana womanist is... family centred... more concerned with her entire 'family' than just herself and her sisters even though genuine sisterhood is also very important to her reality"(p.34).

Since, Africana womanist is not separatist but accommodationist in nature, Hudson-Weems in Sotunsa (2008:24) submits:

The Africana womanist welcomes male presence and participation in her struggle as her destiny is often intertwined with his in their struggle for humanity... Moreover, the Africana womanist desires positive male companionship.

#### 5.5.7 Deconstructing female writings: Sofola

In Sofola's plays, she tries to attract male utterances and belies some societal stereotypes that disempower women and label them as the once muted women (voices) in order to retell the female story or reveal the female power that has been made powerless and tucked under the carpet, by the patriarchal society. This is exactly what Sofola does in *The Showers*, where she disagrees with binary oppositions of male/female, strong/weak, active/inactive, or tough/soft which become the basis for inequality in gender construct. As far as she is concerned, Sofola believes there is no victory without women and no history without them as well. If women will exhibit that powerful traits in them as she advocates, it must not be done in the procedures of radical Western feminism, rather it should be the type of female assertion that is "practices with an African bias and respect for African values,"(Ekpa, 2000:30) cited in Emenyi (2005:121). This is reflected in the body of *The Showers*, the composition of which comprises the community and encompasses people of both sexes: "it is a gathering of responsible citizens for the realisation of carefully articulated goals as (Emenyi, 2005:122) opines.

Sofola, therefore, tries to reposition or rather deconstruct that power, that maleness conferred on men by the socio-cultural norms of the society, in her effort to invert and confirm the dominant power structure agreeing with Bauer (1991) in Emenyi (2004:48) that 'if women choose the option of silence, men cannot speak for them as there are some aspects of the female sexuality that men cannot fully comprehend'. She expounds further that 'speech is not always a sign of power nor silence a sign of weakness, but the context of both reflects gendered relations'. She does prove that 'silence is not a female virtue but rather a covert way of destroying humanity'. This is the point Sofola made in *The Showers* maiden production leaflet that "the nation and indeed the man, is as good as the female component the nation makes each. (Emenyi,2005:117).

The binary opposition of male or female, femininity and masculinity, active or passive are perceived as genderless attributes and variables through Sofola's protagonist, Obinna, as her sister-in-law, observes:

**Mag Demola:** We are only seeing the tip of the iceberg. My niece-in-law represents the temper of new breeds of daughters in our land. We are witnessing a time bomb which requires utmost care or it might explode and destroy all of us (7).

Women, except a few that are still submissive to a fault, exhibit that strongness and masculinity in them while trying to assert themselves and refuting men's oppression. Thus, it is believed that it is only social consciousness and collective action in a revolutionary spirit that will lead Sofola's heroines to social rebirth and liberation from societal oppressive machineries. There are enough facts to support female self-assertion in Nigeria as depicted in these selected plays. As Kolawole 1999:93) avers:

Sofola has come out clearly on the side of the African woman as she advocates the eradication of any existing tradition that oppresses, degrades, exploits or endangers women. The shower of change is the crux of Sofola's call for transformation of women's condition.

## CHAPTER SIX

### FINDINGS, SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS (FOR FURTHER STUDIES)

#### 6.0 Introduction

This chapter attempts to recapitulate findings of the study. A reappraisal of the theoretical framework and the methodology adopted for the study is presented. The theoretical and practical implications of the study are also highlighted.

#### 6.1 Findings

The major preoccupation in the study has been to analyse female masculinity attributes exhibited by heroines in the dramatic works of selected dramatists literally classified as belonging to the first and second generations of playwrights in their continents. This has been done from the vantage, feminist theories especially as related to gender theory and study. A special consideration is given to two of the concepts of gender studies - liberal feminism mixed with the Deconstructionist theory, which express that masculine and feminine traits could be found in any individual whether male or female.

In the context of Shakespearean plays studied, selected female protagonists are examined with regard to their exhibition of the related masculine traits in them within the texts. It was discovered that Shakespeare has been fortnight, either consciously or unconsciously, against any marginalisation and relegation of the female species in private and public matters during his era when women matters were not so recognised. He rather believes, in most of his literary works, in their emancipation and self-actualisation, as well as entitlement to equal treatment in the society. He equally holds to the fact that there are many faces to womanhood. Hence, women share equal traits with men, since they are both created by the same Being who has been described as a 'genderless being'. This agrees with the submission of Showalter (1988:209) in Ewuru (2011:10) that "there is no specifically male and female way of writing or approaching text because human imagination is essentially genderless".

In the plays studied, Shakespeare perceives women as determined, dominant, persuasive, strong and confident individuals much different from the stereotypical roles

ascribed women in his era. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Portia, a courageous and decisive woman, remains in disguised position, an exclusively male attribute in the Shakespearean period, to win a case in the law court, after having used her voice in a persuasive manner to get the best spouse for herself out of those her society seemed to have compelled her to choose from. She subtly refuses the patriarchal and compelled attempts of other suitors and marries Bassanio despite his poor, infamous situation. In her strong stance, Portia defends her love for him, as she vehemently challenges all the discriminatory actions of the patriarchal society personified by Shylock's wicked statement on oath to take 'a pound of flesh'.

The device of utilising the binary oppositions of the male stream in the hierarchical dichotomies is inherent in Shakespearean plays, as well as in the selected Nigerian texts examined. All the playwrights, particularly the male writers, present their female protagonists as capable of exhibiting whichever traits that are peculiar to humans: good or bad, strong or weak; irrespective of the sex. Also, they affirm that by implication, men and women can, and do, exhibit either traits as may be applicable.

It is also observed that though subjugated places are to ascribed women, and men were generally seen as having the ruling voices as fathers, husbands, masters and lords and a public life is virtually impossible for women, Shakespeare sees differently. His female characters, Portia (*MV*) and Juliet (*RJ*) use persistence, coercion, control –in assertive ways to dismiss the potential suitors dictated by the society. Viola (*TN*) and Lady Macbeth (*MAC*) use coercion to assert wills on their men. Equally, mannerisms, soliloquies, prophecies, persuasions are subtly and effectively used by all protagonists. For instance, Juliet (*RJ*) and Viola (*TN*) use mannerisms and soliloquies with infectious love to exert forces that trap their lovers; while Portia, despite her father's high-handedness, uses persuasions with doggedness to subvert the men of her days. These female protagonists attempt to put all the masculine attributes in them to subvert the society's ethics of women's voicelessness in a male - governed society.

Shakespeare's earliest heroines, as Penn (1998:3) opines, find power in the use of words as women write to take back the power pillaged from them by the men in the plays. It is also found that these female protagonists resort into exhibiting a kind of voice act masculinity to coerce, lure, intimidate and persuade the men of their time. For instance,

Lady Macbeth finds solace in leading her husband, Macbeth, into a realm of powerlessness through her ability to persuade using language, voiced act.

Similarly, in *Merchant of Venice*, Portia uses the power of words to rewrite the ending of a tragedy though she does so in male costumes. Without her disguised dress code, her argument would have remained unheard by the court and the rings (that is, her subsequent power over her husband) would have remained in his hands. “Thus Portia does not need to become a man to use language” but she needs to become one before she could be heard. Accordingly, the logic of women must be disguised as men’s in order for it (the logic) to be applied (Penn, 1998:2). To Penn (1998), this logic does not strip women of their power, but strips society (which is patriarchal and oppressive in nature) of its unfairness.

Against this backdrop, Shakespeare tries to depict women as equally powerful as men, thereby questioning the existing traditional stereotype of women designated as weaker vessels and dislodging the established hierarchies of power or powerlessness of men and women. He thus, renders the relationship between binary oppositions unstable as either of the sexes can exercise masculine traits when necessary. Masculinity has to do with gender-ascribed behaviour that are part of a regular pattern of a person not because such behaviours are innate, but because they are socially accepted to be such and not gender-based.

Even though it is noted that women’s roles are valued in the contemporary Nigerian society since the pre-colonial days as earlier noted by Uku (1996:30), Afonja (1996:8) and Olasupo (2010:43), their strong activities are noted as they occupied elevated positions and wielded political influence before and after the advent of colonialism. It is widely known that the contributions of women in most of the sectors are monumental but the question has been whether such are recognised and evaluated as well.

In this study, we examine female masculinity in the dramatic works of two seasoned playwrights in Nigeria. This is done alongside gender related theories, and concepts: feminism and feminist theory based on the concepts of equality and deconstructionist. Women are assessed with reference to diverse ways by which they have exercised the maleness contained in their female bodies as shown in the various texts studied.

It is revealed that Nigerian women of the contemporary age are involved in ways to exhibit the maleness in them, without much noise as did the Shakespearean women, though,



with some modifications. Unlike Shakespearean women who engage in tranvestism to perpetuate masculine activities, Titubi (*MT*) engages in a psychological warfare-fashioned disguise to suppress warlords in their aggressive and fearful states, using persuasions with doggedness and determinations to subvert warriors and agitators fury when men go into hiding. In so doing, she proves the point that women too are manly when necessary.

Also, these women: Ibidun (*RED*), Obinna (*SHO*) and Ogwoma (*WED*) use persistence and revolutionary qualities to transform the lives of their people when the society has nothing to offer its citizens except oppressions, intimidations and exploitations. These female characters gallantly challenge the situations, not minding the costs, thereby belying the derogatory ideas of women by the society. Through Titubi's (*MT*) use of beauty, courage and determination, she quells the militant peasants that cause trouble in their town. She arrests the situation, making the riotous society peaceful.

From the plays analysed for this study, it is realised that all the playwrights depict radical powerful and masculine female protagonists in their quests to show that one's gender does not determine one's performability trait within the society. All the female characters examined exhibit inherent masculine traits in them to actively fight against societal intimidations and to brace up to the harsh challenges facing them at various stages. With such traits, some of the heroines assert their wills, refuting maltreatment and using their position to maintain social cohesion without ignoring their humanity as responsible and conscious individuals. They each, in their determined but subtle ways, help de-establish the usual old trend, of weak, feminine female characters and move towards a new trend which to Ekwierhoma (2002:218) is coercive dominant female disposition. These strong dispositions (attributes) are pointers to the fact that humans, irrespective of sexes share equal but inherent attributes that are or may be put to action as the cases warrant.

These playwrights' works are examined using female masculinity clues of dress code, voice act, assertiveness and body language; a proof that masculinity or femininity is not gender tied but is a matter of societal identity as either men or women could be so identified and behaved either way.

In the study, it is established that women have their unique ways of putting the masculine traits inherent in them into action without raising much dust but such traits command equal obedience and respect in spite of subtleness employed. Shakespearean

female protagonists exhibit isolated, individualistic clues, while protagonists in selected Nigerian plays exhibit masculinities through alliance of assertiveness in the spirit of unionism.

Women in Shakespearean plays display all the masculine attributes of dress code, voice act, assertiveness and body language clues, while those in Nigerian drama engage largely in assertive tendency clues. These semiotic features establish the era-bound differential exhibition of female masculinity in the dramatic works of Shakespeare, Sofola and Osofisan.

The use of comparative approach helps us to avoid any important variable and assists in bringing the three writers into the global mainstream. This becomes important, even when it is a known fact that Shakespeare became a global figure in literary world as far back as 16th century, even before his counterparts were born. Yet, his ideology fits perfectly into the 21st contemporary society. The comparative discussion of the playwrights from different angles and variables add more facts to the point that humans originated from the same source and are gifted with similar behavioural tendencies that are only put to practice as dictated by the socio-cultural constructs of the society.

Within this comparative perspective, we try to expose the writers' integral link as regards their socio-cultural perceptions of gender identities. The writers prove in their writings that gender identity, that of (being masculine or feminine), or gender order through which codes of masculinity and femininity are created and recreated are based on the meanings within the society. This comes out of the individual's associations or interactions with the roles played by his or her sex within the community. Such roles that have been meaningfully ascribed to her, accordingly by the society, become the yardstick to measuring her behavioural traits, whether masculine or feminine. Going by the above submissions, all females characters examined equally take up roles attributable to masculinity within their realm. It is justifiable then, that women have and exercise masculinity attributes, equally or differently from the men's modes.

In the study, it is clear that the two male writers are among the few and outstanding writers, who portray women as real characters possessing likely qualities and traits like their male counterparts and that women have different faces of humanhood as they share similar traits with men. We also underline the radical nature of these playwrights in their style, dramaturgy and portrayal of female characters. For instance, the study shows that their

writings are different from their precursors; as their works are enriched with creating strong female characterisation encompassed with dominant and militant traits more than those writers before them. Shakespeare, for instance, depicts equality of attributes - (performability traits) between both sexes as he puts in his female characters, militant, masculine attributes, which equally portray them as having equal ability to exercise power over anybody as their male counterparts.

The male playwrights have equal notion of the female protagonists as they both make case for the transformatory roles and talents of women in the society. They present their females' militant attributes in a fastidious, persuasive, subtle, and at times, in subversive way. This is done in agreement with Boyce (1986) quoted in Ekwierhoma (2002:175):

Literary works of art should be positive in creating female role models who affirm themselves and whose identities are not dependent on men or pivoted on them.

The female protagonists in these texts exhibit their masculinity traits through **Dress code, voice act, body language and assertive tendency**.

The playwrights who believe in reality have shown how unequal powers are challenged even by the female heroines they create to justify that any use of power - masculine or whatever - does not reside with just a sex but both sexes to allow for gender equality and freedom of action among the people within the society. It is discovered that the substances of the playwrights' works are drawn from their local landscape, and their heritage as they rework the historical events of their environments to serve their social vision.

These writers transcend national boundaries into international levels, believing the fact that their ideologies transpire their local realms into universal eras. Despite the fact that their societies tend to be patriarchal, the writers recognised the ubiquitous power and strengths of women in exercising some pronounced degree of control and power just like their male counterparts. This shows the staunch belief of the writers that an individual; man or woman or both, could engage in different or similar roles as determined by their socio cultural milieu. This reflects the societal support accorded the male writers then and now as stated by Ekwierhoma (2002:3):

African society has for long been dominated by man and male oriented precepts like patriarchy and masculinism. Writing has been the preserve of men and female creativity has a history that does not date far. ...Female writers depict active female characters with much force.

The equilibrium achieved in the dramatic works of these playwrights is a humanistic statement that despite the socio-cultural and political intimidations, humanity may achieve the desired victory as both sexes are gifted with similar traits and attributes depending on time and space.

Although the individuality is poised against collective actions in Shakespeare's literary works, the Nigerian contemporary works stress on collective achievements of both men and women to attain their desired wills and how 'lone' attempts at realising such counted against Ogwoma in *WED*.

## 6.2 Summary

The main concern of this study is to reconstruct the notion that masculinity, a gender identity and socio-cultural construct, is gender biased. It is observed that gender related behaviours are not as important as their implied meanings. Men and women have views of themselves along a feminine-masculine dimensions of meanings (gender identities) that guide their behaviours. The concepts of masculinity and femininity are rooted in the social - one's gender rather than biological - one's sex. These social constructs are transgendered as either gender could be so ascribed.

Samples for the study are drawn from the English Renaissance and the contemporary Nigerian dramatic literary texts. Information from textual materials such as monographs, books, journals and relevant materials from different libraries is elicited. Internet facilities are utilised for additional information.

The study highlights various concepts: feminism, masculinity, femininity, female masculinity, gender and other related concepts. Comparative case study is adopted for methodology. An attempt is made to use the concept of equality and citizenship in gender study in the exploration of female masculinity in the selected plays of three playwrights: Shakespeare, Osofisan and Sofola. The study investigate some variables as related to female masculinity indicators in the expression of such by all the female characters examined.

Findings reveal that female protagonists in the texts studied exhibited masculine traits. Though, different from the conventional format, they all put up radical intimidating traits that earn them their desired wills. Across the two eras examined, the English Renaissance and contemporary Nigerian societies, all the females exhibited female masculinity in diverse forms or indicators.

The study submits that women, in both societies, activate the maleness in them although with minor variations. In the English Renaissance age, women exhibit their traits individually but subtly as most of them engage in impersonation or disguise mode to make themselves acceptable to the norms and ideals of the society. Women in contemporary Nigerian society tend to be more radical and militant as they join forces with men to achieve their desired wills. They imbibe the spirit of collectivism to transform their society when need be.

In conclusion, this study maintains that irrespective of one's gender, or gender order of masculinity or femininity, which is mere gender identity, both genders share similar traits as defined by the societies. By implication, the awareness of the many feminist theorists assert that masculinity cannot be conceived without reference to its other – femininity - as the concepts have become interwoven as men and women consciously or otherwise have come to be identified with both traits. This knowledge would suffice to retain and recognise the possibility of curbing gender disparity among gender relations in society. It has considered indication of female masculinity through these dimension: dressing code dimension. The study thus, discovers that dress code dimensions of disguise, cross dressing and transvestism coupled with transgenderism can be diplomatically used to express female masculinity by the concerned person perfectly to intimidate and achieve certain desired wills or exercise control of situation and persons as revealed in most of the plays examined.

Furthermore, the investigation of voice act with significations of mannerism, persuasion and conversational drill in a peculiar manner reveals that a kind of coercive, effective but unconscious and subtle masculinity is exerted on the other party that is involved in the conversation.

It is also observed that the persuasive variable of the voice act easily casts spell on any person that is addressed more than the visible and aggressive means. Additionally, the investigation of body language expressed in the texts depicts that a kind of effective charm

could be used on an onlooker and probably an addressee, with the use of visible and highly notable aesthetics and glamorous look from women as seen in the study. The flirtatious aspect of the non-verbal cues speaks volume as it is so much effective that opposite sex falls prey of the spell.

The study submits that assertive tendency in form of persistence, dominant exercise of control and some coercive measures are essential linguistic strategies that express the social power of the speaker in any interaction. It reveals that persistence, as a variable, arrests and captures people easily more than other strategies like domination, manipulation and sometimes, militarisation of others.

### **6.3 Suggestions for future study**

Several means by which women exercise or exhibit masculinity traits differently from the conventional ways in which masculinity traits are exercised by men are discussed. Many more avenues could be identified for this. It is an area rich for continuing investigation, but the space is limited.

Firstly, one is only beginning to come to terms with the fact that some behavioural traits or rather identities cut across both genders. Future study might examine how gender identities - masculinity and femininity - can be modified through joint participation between genders in societal institutions, such as in the area of politics, religion and economy. For example, to what extent and in what ways might employers socialise employees into particular views of being masculine or feminine, in order to maintain a smooth flow of work and profit, while eradicating inequality among genders?

Secondly, it is known that gender identities are tied with socio-cultural constructs of a particular society, such that meanings attached to femininity and masculinity are cross-culturally defined. There should be need to investigate the variations in the meanings of being masculine and feminine. This type of study might help us understand, apart from differential power and status, how society's privileges and responsibilities are allocated.

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