GENDER ATTITUDES TOWARDS FEMINIST LITERATURE: LECTURERS' AND STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT WITH FEMINIST LITERARY TEXTS AT A UNIVERSITY IN ZIMBABWE

BY

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'As the candidate's supervisor, I agree to the submission of this thesis'

Signed_____

Name_____

Date_____

DECLARATION

I, **Winnet Chindedza**, declare that this thesis is my own work. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.

Signature

SUPERVISOR'S STATEMENT

This dissertation has been submitted with my approval

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Professor Ayub Sheik

July 2017

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my late loving mother, Agnes Matambo, my late grandmother, Monica Matambo and my late uncle, Aleck Matambo, who never lived to have a chance to see me accomplish my long awaited ambition. My dedication also goes to all men and women of goodwill.

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ABSTRACT

The study reports on a qualitative study of the views of university lecturers and students on the feminist literary texts they engaged with at a selected university in Zimbabwe. Through the lenses of the feminist and critical paradigms, the thesis examined how university lecturers and students react to feminist ideologies that are observable in the feminist literary texts they engaged with vis-à-vis their patriarchal orientation. Their reactions to feminist ideologies were viewed from the reader response theory perspective. From a liberal feminist perspective, the study suggests the need to add more feminist literary texts in the selected university's undergraduate English curriculum. The study utilised informal conversations, semi-structured interviews, observations and document analysis as methods of gathering data. The study found that lecturers' and students' views towards feminist literary texts were influenced by several factors which are: patriarchy and socialisation, consciousness, religion, generational cohorts and education. The study recommends that lecturers take into consideration the addition of more feminist literary texts in the university undergraduate English curriculum because these feminist literary texts address important gender issues that are topical in this generation of feminism.

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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Historically, the writing canon was a preserve for men. It was very difficult for women writers to publish their works. Their works were considered not suitable to be read by the public. Walters (2005) posits that their works of art were criticised by both men and women and they were never appreciated. However, some daring women authors had to publish their works using male pseudonyms. An example is that of Mary Ann Evans who used the pseudonym, George Eliot. However, the situation has improved since Mary Ann Evans' time. Women can now publish their works using their real names. As a result, the twenty first century saw feminist writers emerging from different countries and the Sub-Saharan region has also produced its fair share of feminist writers.

Since the emerging of feminist writers in Africa, many academics have taken a keen interest in female writers' works of art. Many scholars have critically analysed these works and invariably found that these authors deal with issues that concern the condition of women and girls in society. According to Chindedza (2012), these authors often portray women who defy societal norms and values to set themselves free from patriarchal bondage. The authors who deal with such issues are deemed to be feminist writers. Some of these feminist literary texts are being studied at a selected university in Zimbabwe. These are Bâ's *So Long A Letter (1980)*, Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen (1974)* and Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions (1988).*

The thrust of this study was to investigate lecturers' and students' views on feminist literary texts that contest patriarchal values in a patriarchal society like Zimbabwe (Chitando, 2011). Through interviewing lecturers and students who engaged with these feminist literary texts, the study hoped to conscientise them on the need to add more feminist literary texts in the university undergraduate English curriculum because these texts address gender issues that have become topical in this era of feminism.

Many studies have focused on the themes that emerge and also analysed female and male characterisation in these feminist literary texts. This study has shifted from the tradition of gathering data from the library to gathering data through investigating the views of those who study and teach these texts at university level. In other words, the study aimed at finding out what lecturers and students say about these texts that expose patriarchal ideologies considering that Zimbabwe is generally patriarchal in nature (Chitando, 2011).

The research reported on a qualitative case study of selected university lecturers' and students' views on the feminist literary texts they were engaged with in the context of Zimbabwean patriarchal society. The main question was what are lecturers' and students' views on issues that depict women as being liberated, economically independent, more hard-working and more intelligent than men in the context of their male dominated societies? The aim was to conscientise university lecturers and students through these feminist literary texts on the important roles played by women in the development of different societies in Zimbabwe and as a result, persuading them to appreciate the importance of adding more feminist literary texts in the selected university's undergraduate English curriculum.

Through the transactional Reader Response Theory lens, I managed to record and analyse views of students and lecturers from semi-structured interviews, observations, focus group discussions, document analysis and informal conversations. The participants interpreted feminist ideologies in feminist literary texts from their own experiences, knowledge and beliefs (Tyson, 2005).

The analysis was done through a liberal feminist lens. The feminist and critical paradigms were used as lenses to guide this study. This thesis is an analysis of my observations and lecturers' and students' responses on feminist ideologies observable in the feminist literary texts being studied at the selected university.

I begin this chapter by first discussing the location of the study, and then engage with patriarchy. I will discuss the focus and purpose, the statement of the problem, the rationale and the research questions of the study. I will then give an overview of its significance and limitations and finally, present the organisation of the thesis.

1.2 Location of the study

The study was carried out in Zimbabwe, which is located in Southern Africa. Zimbabwe has a population of about 14 million. It has two major ethnic groups, Shona and Ndebele and minor groups. The country is multicultural and has multi-religious groups. Besides being multicultural, it is patriarchal in nature (Chitando, 2011). English is the official language whilst Shona and Ndebele are national languages. English is used as the medium of instruction in the Zimbabwean education system.

There are ten universities in Zimbabwe and located in different provinces. The selected university is in Masvingo Province, which is south of Zimbabwe. The university enrols students from different parts of the country and from outside Zimbabwe. These are from Sudan, Namibia and Swaziland. These students come from different ethnic groups and therefore, hold different beliefs. However, during the course of this study, there were no students from those other countries mentioned above. The study was carried out with undergraduate Bachelor of Education (Honours) degree in English students and lecturers who taught these students. These lecturers and students grew up in patriarchal Zimbabwe. So, the following sections provide an orientation of patriarchy in general and then patriarchy in the Zimbabwean context in order for the reader to understand the patriarchal orientation of the participants.

Feminists blame patriarchy for the oppression of women in different societies. They believe that all women's problems stem from patriarchy. This study is feminist in nature; therefore, the word patriarchy features prominently throughout the study. This study was carried out in Sub-Saharan Africa and in Zimbabwe in particular. Chancer and Watkins (2006) posit that Africa leaves little doubt that it is patriarchal and Chitando (2011) affirms that Zimbabwe is not any different. Throughout the study, patriarchy has been identified by participants as the origin of women's problems in the feminist literary texts they were engaged with. The texts were written by African female writers. Their writings show how patriarchy impacts negatively on both men and women but especially women in different African societies. So, the study investigated participants' views on such texts vis-à-vis their patriarchal orientation.

1.3 Patriarchy: an overview

Patriarchy is a system of imbalanced power relations that gives men rights in all areas of our lives, social, economic, institutional, cultural, political and spiritual, while women and gender non-conforming people are methodically underprivileged. Feminism is not about 'man-hating' it is about changing the socially created and classified belief of patriarchy. Since patriarchy pervades society, it is no surprise that it pervades social activities as well. Patriarchy is also a political-social system that maintains that males are innately dominating, superior to everything and everyone believed weak, especially females, and gifted with the right to control and rule over the weak and maintain that dominance through numerous forms of psychological intimidation and violence (understandingpatriarchyhttp://imagine NoBorders.org).

Patriarchy is the term used to describe the society in which we live today, characterised by current and historic unequal power relations between women and men whereby women are systematically disadvantaged and oppressed. This takes place across almost every sphere of life but is particularly noticeable in women's under-representation in key state institutions, in decision-making positions and in employment and industry. Male violence against women is also a key feature of patriarchy. Women in minority groups face multiple oppressions in this society, as race, class and sexuality (understanding patriarchy http://imagineNoBorders.org).

Francis, Waring, Stavropoulos and Kirkby (2003) expound that patriarchy developed out of feminist arguments about gender in the 1960s and 1970s.Patriarchy substituted the earlier term 'sexism,' stressing the importance of organisations in gender oppression rather than individual prejudice. It is still used as shorthand to designate a societal system in which maleness and masculinity confer an advantaged position of power and authority, where man is the Self while woman is Other. Therefore, patriarchy can be defined as a social system in which structural variances in privilege, power and authority are invested in masculinity and the cultural, economic and/or social positions of men.

Francis et al. (2003) further propound that under a patriarchal regime, women are by definition excluded from positions of power and authority, except where power and authority work to support individual men or the social system as a whole. So, a woman might be authoritative towards her children in the home in order to provide a calm and supportive

environment for her husband. She might be authoritative as a teacher in order to reinforce the values and attitudes constitutive of the social system.

Chancer and Watkins (2006) propound that proponents of radical feminism such as Kate Millet in *Sexual Politics* and Shulamith Firestone in *The Dialect of Sex* frequently referred to patriarchy as a central concept to Capitalism, where males own everything and women and children work for the benefit of the male. Millet and other radical feminists maintain that patriarchy came to mean male domination in an institutional as well as cultural sense. They go on further to explain that patriarchal societies were ones wherein, if examined closely, men held positions of power in virtually all decision-making spheres. Therefore, by this definition, a country is patriarchal if those who head its economy are overwhelmingly male. In Zimbabwe, men hold influential positions, and it fits well into this category. When Millet wrote *Sexual Politics* in 1970, most countries, including the United States of America, were patriarchal by definition. By 2005, the situation had changed to some degree, though a strong case can be made that most European and American nations remain male-dominated. Many countries in the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Latin America also leave little doubt that they are patriarchal going by this definition (Chancer &Watkins, 2006).

Whilst patriarchy seems to be in favour of men, it also stifles men in its excessive expectation on the powerful roles that they should play in their families and society. So, men are not spared by patriarchy. In that case, patriarchy hurts men too in that performing masculinity can be difficult (being expected to take the lead in initiating sexual activity) or dangerous (being able to physically fight).Men in every society on earth are cast into the role of hyper argent. They are expected to assume positions of overt power in the family and in the political, legal and financial spheres. This is an expectation of their gender role and one they have to fulfil lest they are seen as 'not a man' and thus worthless to their families and society (understanding patriarchy http://imagineNoBorders.org). Patriarchy expects men to become and remain emotional cripples, since it is a structure that denies men full right to their freedom of will. It is difficult for any man of any class to rebel against patriarchy, to be disloyal to the patriarchal parent, be that parent female or male. Therefore, to brainwash boys into the rules of patriarchy, we force them to feel pain and to deny their feelings.

Patriarchy is a system that has been equated to capitalism by many scholars and they claim that these two are inseparably linked. Patriarchy imitates the oppressive and exploitative

muscles that are inherent in capitalism. It oppresses and exploits girls and women or say, those who do not wield power in society. However, its exploitative and oppressive nature is directly felt by women and girls. Just like capitalists, women and girls are forced into unpaid labour and at the end of the day, men enjoy the benefits. In the feminist literary texts that were used in this study, women and girls work hard whilst men and boys enjoy the benefits of women and girls' labour. Therefore, it is important that I give a brief discussion of patriarchy and capitalism.

1.3.1 Patriarchy and capitalism

Much of the feminist scholarly literature argues that patriarchy and capitalism are inseparably linked. The direct or indirect supposition is that capitalism is adverse to women's interests and gender equality. The connection between capitalism and patriarchy is one of the most debatable issues in feminist scholarship. Women are a means of production and reproduction to be controlled in capitalism. Capitalism and patriarchy are so inextricably linked that they encompass not two systems but one, which Gordon called "capitalist patriarchy." Women are not just reproducers in capitalism; they are a cheap reserve labour force or segregated labour force for capitalism. Women's free labour in the home as housewives permits capitalists to pay men less for their labour and provides for the reproduction of the labour force (Gordon, 2000).

There are other ways capitalism and patriarchy are said to be equally reinforcing. Patriarchy seeks to consign women as predominantly mothers and housewives to the home, where they are secluded and can be subjected by men. Capitalism reinforces this goal through occupational discrimination and low wages, which force most women to labour in the home because they have no way to take care of themselves (Chancer &Watkins, 2006).

After providing an orientation of patriarchy in general, the following section discusses patriarchy in the context of Zimbabwe because this study was carried out in patriarchal Zimbabwe. Chancer and Watkins' (2006) definition of a patriarchal country situates Zimbabwe into a patriarchal context.

1.3.2 Patriarchy: the Zimbabwean context

Zimbabwe is patriarchal and is presently endeavouring to restructure itself by introducing structures that involve women in positions of decision-making. Chabaya (2009) reports that such creativity has seen the proportion of females enrolled in tertiary institutions gradually increase from 30 % in 1997 to 48% at present. In other words, it means that patriarchy is a changing structure in which women always have the potential for authority. Therefore, if patriarchy can be changed, this can be done through feminist activism.

Patriarchy in Zimbabwe has thus altered biological sex into politicised gender, giving men supremacy while making women inferior and assigning them a 'second class status' in society. The lowering of women's position was further aggravated during the colonial era when customary law was presented in which women had insignificant power if any, in both civic and social circles. Kambarami (2006) posits that women were treated like children. Patriarchy is premised on the dominance of males over women (Hartmann, 2002). In Zimbabwe, the categorised social situation is that the most authoritative roles are held by men. Therefore, men are in positions of authority because of their ability to exercise control through violence or threat of violence, and that personal traits and social activities are closely tied to men (Chitando, 2011).

Kambarami (2006) contends that radical feminists describe patriarchy as a social construction in which men appropriate all social roles and keep women in inferior positions and therefore, advocate for a reversal of this status quo. In as much as feminists want to see a dynamic shift from patriarchy, the study showed that it will take long before both women and men wean themselves from patriarchal influence.

The education system inherited by the government of Zimbabwe at Independence in 1980 was characterised by prejudicial and unequal distribution of educational resources and services between the black majority and girls on the one hand, and esteeming the white minority and boys on the other(Gudyanga, Chirimuuta & Bhukuvhani, 2012; Chabaya, 2009; Kambarami, 2006). This showed racial attitudes of that era embedded with patriarchal attitudes which continue to characterise the Zimbabwean culture to date.

However, the problems of access to education have now been combated and Zimbabwe nearly has equality in overall enrolments between girls and boys at primary and secondary

school, as well as at higher institutions of learning (Swainson, 2009). Though it is the case, gender inequality is still reflected within the school curriculum practices. Gender differentiation is still present along patriarchal ideologies within the school curriculum. For example, the participation of females in post-secondary education in Zimbabwe is being enhanced by affirmative programmes. Nonetheless, Mutekwe and Mobida (2012) note that although this expansion has opened up chances for more young girls to enter higher and tertiary education, the challenge is to make sure that effective teaching is maintained and gender equity is enhanced.

Rutoro (2013), Mutekwe, (2012) and Kambarami (2006) have described Zimbabwe as patriarchal in nature because it believes in male dominance and female subordination. The Zimbabwean society positions women in subordinate roles in the family and more often, in the larger society. Patriarchal attitudes inevitably emanate from the family, firstly through the socialisation process but reinforced in the larger community or society especially by the school.

It is against this background that I intended to explore the views of lecturers and students on feminist literary texts that contest dominant patriarchal ideologies. In the process, I wished to explore participants' attitudes towards patriarchal ideologies, through engaging them in discussions of feminist ideologies that are observable in the feminist literary texts they were engaged with.

This class that I was engaged with was mixed not only in terms of gender, but also in terms of different social, cultural, and religious backgrounds. These students come from different social settings, for example, some come from communities where culture is strictly observed, where men and women have socially defined roles. Some come from societies where males are socialised to do chores outside the home whilst females work at home. In other settings, men and women share the same roles; they both go out to work and share the washing of dishes and cooking. Some grew up in families where there are only boys or girls. In such settings, there are no defined roles for females and males. Everyone in the home does everything. The students also come from different religious backgrounds although Zimbabwe is predominantly a Christian nation (Kambarami, 2006). Most students come from Christian backgrounds except for a few who practise other religions like African Tradition Religions and other minor religions. The social, cultural and religious backgrounds of individuals can

shape individuals' perceptions to life. Despite their different religion, social and cultural affiliations, all the participants in this study had a Zimbabwean patriarchal orientation.

1.4 Focus and purpose of the study

The focus of this study was to investigate gender attitudes towards feminist literary texts. I also intended to inquire into the representation of feminist literary texts in the undergraduate English curriculum. My hypothesis was that feminist literary texts were not adequately represented in the English curriculum, for the curriculum had only three feminist literary texts out of twelve texts (See appendix E). Its purpose was to elicit qualitative data that reveal attitudes of lecturers and students towards feminist literary texts. By eliciting data from lecturers and university undergraduate students, I hoped to gain insight into their attitudes towards feminist ideologies that contest patriarchal ideologies, vis-à-vis their patriarchal orientation. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to confirm from the university lecturers and students their views of feminist ideologies that are observable in the feminist literary texts they were engaged with. Through discussions in interviews, the study hoped to conscientise participants on the importance of adding more feminist literary texts, and helps to change the status quo in the selected university undergraduate English curriculum.

My reasoning was that, this research would do several things amongst the main objectives of this study. Through engaging lecturers and students, it would highlight controversial issues of women and men as they are presented in the feminist literary texts. It would foster behaviour change, attitudes and policy in participants. It would give an insight into the interpretation of feminist literature in general and feminist literary texts in particular from a feminist perspective. It would also give lecturers and students a platform to discuss issues that affect men and women in their different societies and to suggest solutions to such issues. However, the overall aim was to investigate lecturers' and students' views on the feminist literary texts and conscientise them on the importance of these feminist literary texts in addressing gender issues that are topical globally. By so doing, they would be conscientised on the need to add more feminist literary texts in the undergraduate English curriculum thereby transforming the English curriculum.

1.5 Problem statement

There is inadequate representation of feminist voices in the selected university undergraduate English curriculum. Out of twelve literary texts for the semester, only three were feminist (see appendix E) and the rest were male and a few female writers. Therefore, I intended to investigate from lecturers and students their views on the texts and the representation of these feminist literary texts in the university undergraduate English curriculum.

The study answered the following critical questions; what are lecturers' and students' views on these feminist literary texts? Why do they hold these views? And how do lecturers and students feel about the representation of feminist literary texts in the undergraduate English curriculum? The investigation was carried out with selected university lecturers and first year undergraduate Bachelor of Education (Honours) degree students who engaged with these texts at a university in Zimbabwe.

1.6 Rationale for the study

I have always had an abiding interest in feminism and motivation for this study emanates from my childhood experiences, my experience as a high school teacher and a university lecturer in Zimbabwe. The research for my Master's degree also inspired me to carry out this research. At Masters' level, I analysed texts by female feminist writers such as Alice Walker, Tsitsi Dangarembga, Buchi Emecheta, Mariama Bâ, and Tony Morrison. The themes explored in these texts motivated me to investigate university lecturers and students' views towards such writings, vis-à-vis societal norms, values and beliefs in Zimbabwe. Chindedza (2012) posits that, feminist literary texts explore themes on women's liberation, women's economic empowerment, and women's emancipation among other issues. These themes go against societal norms, values and beliefs in an overtly patriarchal country such as Zimbabwe.

Studies on feminism in Zimbabwe have been done by Chindedza (2012), Chitando (2011), Moyana (2006) and Kambarami (2006) amongst others. Their studies focused on the analysis of feminist literary texts and they analysed the texts from various feminist perspectives. On the other hand, this study investigated students' and lecturers' attitudes towards feminist literary texts. It was viewed from a feminist reader response theory approach. The study is

important because it hoped to conscientise lecturers and students on the importance of feminist literary texts in addressing gender issues that have become topical in this generation of feminism.

1.7 Critical research questions

Patriarchy is at the root of the victims' misery and injustices which all lead to the destruction of the individual's ego. Paxton and Hughes (2007) assert that women have been oppressed throughout history and patriarchy is still not an out-dated concept. Owing to Zimbabwe being a patriarchal nation, the study sought to investigate university lecturers and students' views on the feminist literary texts they were engaged with vis-à-vis their patriarchal orientation. These feminist literary texts contest patriarchal ideologies. These texts were: Mariama Bâ's *So Long A Letter (1980)*, Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen (1974)* and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions (1988)*. The following were the **critical questions** that were used to guide this study:

(a)What are lecturers' and students' views on the feminist literary texts in the undergraduate English curriculum at a selected university in Zimbabwe?

(b)Why do they hold these views?

(c)How do lecturers and students feel about the representation of feminist literary texts in the selected university undergraduate English curriculum in Zimbabwe?

1.8 Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

(a) investigate lecturers' and students' views on feminist literary texts in the selected university undergraduate English curriculum in Zimbabwe.

(b) explore why they hold these views.

(c) find out what lecturers and students say about the representation of feminist literary texts in the selected university undergraduate curriculum in Zimbabwe.

The next section conceptualises gender. It is important to conceptualise gender for the reader to understand better, the concept of gender in this study.

1.9 Conceptualising Gender

Gender is a form of social construct, some form of performance (Butler, 2011). The usage of gender in the 1960s/1970s was attached to concepts of stereotypes, socialisation and conditioning. Esplen and Jolly's (2006) definition of gender is not very different from the above notions as they define gender as a collection of socially constructed roles and relationships, personality qualities, attitudes, behaviours, values, relative power and influence that society assigns to the two sexes on a distinctive basis. Gender is an assimilated identity that is learned, changes over time, and differs widely within and across cultures. Gender is interactional and refers not merely to women or men but to the relationship between them. Esplen and Jolly go further to explain that gender refers to the economic, social and cultural traits and chances associated with being male or female at a certain point in time.

Traditionally, the term gender is a word that has been used to refer to social or cultural differences associated with being biologically male or female (Chrysoula, 2010). Feminists such as Butler in Chrysoula (2010) argue that gender is a social division of differences based on sex. Sokoya and Muthukrishna (2003) posit that, this argument concurs with the view that a child's view of maleness or femaleness derives from biological sex. Socialisation representatives tend to relate to the biological sex of a child as well as to inborn biological tendencies that are capable of controlling attitudinal and environmental forces (Oakley, 2015). Therefore, the definition of gender vacillates between biological determinism and gender being understood as a societal construct, meaning that it is not only distinctively connected to biological sex but relates to social setting too and to individual identity (Chrysoula, 2010).Chrysoula further argues that the most important thing, the biggest single factor in one's life, is whether one is born male or female. In most societies, it determines one's expectations, activities, outlook, ethics, manners and almost everything.

In the newer usage, gender is theorised as a basic standard of social structure and cultural interpretation (Acker, 2006). Acker further defines gender as the designing of difference and domination through divisions between women and men, which is vital to many societal processes. The Oxford Dictionary (2011) defines gender as the state of being male or female. So, the current understanding of gender is evidence of critical engagement of the studies is that gender is a social construct directed to males and females, and it is that social construct that puts individuals in different classes in society. According to biological essentialists,

gender is the variance between males and females in their physiology, acts, likings, capabilities, intelligence and in many other respects owing to the distinctive dispositions they basically have.

Gender theorists and symbolic interactionists, Herbert Mead and William Thomas contend that human conduct such as gender identity arises from the process of contact rather than biological determinism alone (Mtekwe; 2013). While gender relates to biological sex, that is, biological males are socialised in roles that relate to maleness while females are socialised to roles that relate to femaleness. The meanings that individuals come to distinguish themselves in terms of gender are negotiated social concepts between their sex and culture.

Lober (2012) another gender theorist states that gender is an abstract social status not fixed by the physical or that which someone is born with. On this, Butler (1990), another prominent gender theorist asserts that, gender is lodged in the idea that it involves a stylised repetition of acts, an imitation or mimicking of the overriding conventions of a particular gender role. The construction of gender for Butler is physical and nonverbal (performance). Butler's theory does not accept a steady and rational gender identity. This points towards the idea that gender is not something one *is*, it is something one *does* as De Beauvoir (1990) states, 'one is not born a woman, but, rather, becomes one.' Thus if it is converted, the one who becomes a male is not necessarily a man.

As has been illustrated above, gender has been defined differently by different authors and different gender theorists at different stages. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, gender is defined as the state of being male or female and the role an individual plays as a male or female as prescribed by society.

The following section defines gender within the feminist realms because this study is feminist in nature. It is important therefore to provide the reader with a feminist background to the definition of gender although other important gender definitions have been provided.

1.9.1 Defining gender within the feminist realms

Moyana (2006) a Zimbabwean feminist writer, defines gender within the context of the feminist realms. She points out three bases for considering gender, namely: the sexual body;

our societal roles of male and female; and, thirdly, the way we adopt and live out these roles. These three ways of considering gender interrelate at different times in the lives of people and that contact can govern a person's viewpoint and treatment of others. Moyana (2006) further argues that, the fact that men have penises and women do not, that women bear children and men do not, are biological facts which have no determinate significance in themselves. She further explains that gender combines both the biological and the social constructs in humanity. However, she affirms that the societal construct often has an upper hand in defining people's dealings with one another which explains the reason why feminists always find themselves challenging one universal truth: 'that whatever power or status may be given to women in a given culture, they are still, in contrast to men, undervalued as 'the second sex.'

Most research findings presented in the literature review chapter in this study on gender concur with Moyana's definition in that society has the biggest role to play in shaping individuals' attitudes towards the opposite sex because of societal constructs that promote gender discrimination, in this case, discrimination against women.

The next section presents early feminist writers because the feminist theory that was adopted in this study was derived from the ideas of these early feminist writers. The feminist writings used in this study affirm the sentiments of these early writers.

1.10 Early feminist writers: a brief historical background

The following is a brief historical background that is presented by the feminist writer, Margaret Walters (2005), in *Feminism: A very short Introduction.* She presents the following historical background of the early feminist writers:

Mary Astell was one of the first true feminists, perhaps the first English writer to explore and proclaim ideas about women which are still relevant today. She admitted rather unwillingly in her writings, that marriage was necessary to propagate the human species, but claimed that a wife is all too often simply 'a man's upper servant.' She had drafted her own perfect place in her first book, a secular convent, where women could live together, withdraw from the world, in happy studious innocence, 'such as paradise which was forfeited by mother Eve.' Adam

would have no dwelling in this Eden. As she became famous, Astell was often the object of mockery and crude ridicules. She eventually stopped writing. However, her inspiration on feminist writings never stopped. Walters (2005) further explains that, Mary Wollstonecraft echoed Mary Astell when she wrote about the plight of women that, women's flaws were not natural but simply the creation of mis-education. She was angrier than Mary Astell. She was one of the first English female writers to write expressively and at times write furiously about the rights of women and the injustices they often experience. Her writings have never really gone out of style and a great many modern women have responded enthusiastically and thankfully to her work. Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Astell are the proponents of the liberal feminist theory (Walters, 2005).

In 1843,Marin Raid published a book, **A Plea for Women** which has been pronounced, rightly as the most comprehensive and effective declaration by a woman since Mary Wollstonecraft's **Vindication.** She talks about 'womanly' conduct, which in practice, means 'good humour and courtesy to her husband, keeping her children neat and clean, attending to domestic arrangements.' She claims that the education given to girls predominantly 'confines and cramps' them. Any indication of independent thought is quickly curbed. The majority of the girls are restrained into mere automatons.

Walters further expounds that the nineteenth century saw more feminist ideological views from feminist writers. One such writer is Anna Wheeler. Her book focuses on the state of affairs of the married woman, who is reduced to being a piece of 'movable property and an ever-obedient servant to the command of man.' For a married woman, her home becomes a 'prison-house.' The house itself, as well as anything in it belongs to the husband 'and of all belongings, the most prominent object is his breeding machine, the wife.' Anna Miller became an effective writer and her prominence grew strong. Many feminist writers and feminist theorists have followed and are still following her footsteps.

The twentieth century saw more women writers emerging. One such writer is Rebecca West. She mocks masculine sentimentality about women. Her novels reveal an astonishing and often cloying sentimentality about the affairs between men and women. She does not hesitate to blame men for the suffering of women. It might have stemmed from her unhappy private life. The feminist books continued to sell very well and Rebecca West's ideas were adopted and are still being adopted.

In the late twentieth century, a notable variety of western women picked up their pens. One of the most powerful was, and remains, the French writer, Simone de Beauvoir. Women from many countries responded saying that De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) had helped them to see their individual frustrations in terms of the overall condition of women. All through history, De Beauvoir argues, a woman has been deprived of full humanity, denied the human right to create, re-create, and to go beyond ordinary living to find a meaning for life in projects of ever-widening scope. De Beauvoir asserts that 'One is not born, but rather becomes a woman,' and she can change her condition. Most women erroneously look for salvation in love. She conjures up an image of 'the dependent woman' who refuses the passivity that men impose on her. The modern woman accepts masculine values and she prides herself on thinking, taking action, working, creating on the same terms as men.

De Beauvoir contributed much to feminist literature. She wrote books and articles on the state of women. This encouraged more women to join in the writing of books and novels of that calibre.

So, feminism spread during the late twentieth century. Many feminist writers emerged in many African countries. Most of their writings are a counter to male chauvinism in which male authors presented women as submissive, docile, loving, caring and doing anything good for the husband and children. The feminist authors present the characters as self-willed women who defy societal beliefs, norms and values to liberate themselves economically, physically and socially.

This background helps the reader to understand better the feminist literary texts that were used in this study and how feminist ideologies spread globally. The texts were written by African women writers. These literary texts are, *So Long A Letter* (*1981)* by Mariama Bâ *Nervous Conditions (1988)* by Tsitsi Dangarembga and *Second Class Citizen (1979)* by Buchi Emecheta.

 African women writers echo the same sentiments that were articulated by the early English feminist writers. Not only African feminist writers echoed the sentiments of early feminist writers, but also women agencies in most parts of the world took over from these writers and Zimbabwe was not spared from that. Many women pressure groups were created in

Zimbabwe. These groups advocate for the rights of women and the girl-child. Their aim is to address the inequalities that exist between men and women in patriarchal Zimbabwe. Liberal feminists believe that these inequalities can be removed since they are socially constructed (Crossman, 2009). Therefore, the next section briefly presents women agencies in Zimbabwe.

1.11 Women's agencies in Zimbabwe

The wave of feminism in Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular encouraged African women writers to articulate their problems. This also gave rise to women's agencies in Zimbabwe. These agencies were committed to addressing issues of women in patriarchal Zimbabwe. They addressed these issues by holding campaigns throughout the country.

Zimbabwe is a patriarchal society (Chitando, 2011). There still is unfair treatment between men and women. Therefore, these groups aimed at addressing critical gender issues, especially issues that pertained to the treatment of women and girls in Zimbabwean societies. These women agencies contributed to the improvement of women's situation in Zimbabwe today. This study is a feminist research, so, I would not have done justice to this study if I had left out the roles of these women agencies in the fight for women emancipation in a patriarchal nation like Zimbabwe.

Since independence in 1980, Zimbabwe has witnessed the launch of thirty women's agencies rising to forty ,the total of voluntary agencies committed exclusively to the advancement of women National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (NANGO,1992).There are three types of agencies; those that pursue gender interests; those that pursue strategic gender interests and those that pursue inter-agency interests. However, in this section, I focused on Musasa Project in Zimbabwe because this project addresses directly women abuse and patriarchal issues. It is not because the other women agencies are not important. I acknowledge their importance but I cannot discuss all owing to space constraints.

The Musasa project started in 1988 to deal with the problem of violence against women. It has embraced an increasingly radical programme for cultural change in Zimbabwe, an agenda which contests existing values and represents an alternative in its society. Interviews reflected

that fifty to eighty percent of women are affected by domestic violence. Interviews and training exercises with the Zimbabwe Republic Police established initial impressions that not only violence against women was prevalent, but it was also acceptable within the society at large. The violence against women is one which is shared with many other countries in the world. In Zimbabwe, the attitude is heightened by aspects of culture and tradition such as the bride wealth system (lobola) which by selling women to their future husbands, strengthens the impression that the woman is the 'husband's property,' to do as he desires, beating her included. Musasa Project sought to convert the society through far-reaching public education and the re-education of society as is advocated by liberal feminists. This is what the Musasa project did.

The project was cautious about directly attacking social values, such as the belief that the man is the head of the house and the practice of paying the bride price. The project began with a clear announcement of non-identification with feminism of any variety. It was just a 'helping' organisation, set up to give aid to victims of domestic violence. This was done because feminism was not readily accepted in Zimbabwe because it contested dominant patriarchal ideologies of the country. The project now addresses gender issues directly through a series of gender workshops, which aim at making all elements of Zimbabwean society conscious of how patriarchy works within all organisations of the society.

The project tactfully shifted in operating tactics towards an explicitly feminist agenda because it was well established and that the outside world got interested in it. It is during this period when the Musasa project is still on the road to total societal transformation that this study is carried out in Zimbabwe. Therefore, the study becomes significant in that it hoped to conscientise lecturers and students on the importance of adding more feminist literary texts to the university undergraduate curriculum for these texts address gender issues that are topical in Zimbabwe.

1.12 Limitations

Some limitations envisaged include: time constraints and funding. I gathered data during one visit to Zimbabwe due to financial and time constraints. However, on my one visit, I intended to stay long, for at least six months but I managed to stay for five months due to the busy schedule the selected university had. The other factor was that, when I went to collect data, I was not funded, so some of the trips that I intended to make were not possible to embark on because of financial constraints. However, the length of time and financial constraints did not affect the quality of data that I gathered.

Another limitation is that, like in all qualitative studies, especially a case study, the findings from this research will not be generalised although they could be used as a basis for understanding similar phenomena in other multicultural contexts. The findings may apply only to Universities in Zimbabwe and Sub-Saharan Africa and not in the developed countries, since beliefs, norms and values might be different.

1.13 Organisation of the thesis

Chapter one

The chapter begins with the introduction to the study which leads to the background of the thesis. It introduces the reader to the core of the thesis, where important issues that are going to be dealt with are illuminated. It gives an orientation of the whole study. The background to the study, purpose of the study, the problem statement, significance of the study, location of the study as well as limitations of the study are all articulated in the chapter. In fact, this chapter foregrounds issues that are tackled in the whole thesis.

Chapter two

The chapter is on literature reviewed on the phenomenon under study. It illuminates research that was carried out by other researchers from Africa and beyond. The researches that are discussed in this chapter have relevance to my study. I built on and expanded my study on these researches. Studies that were carried out in the Western countries, Africa and Zimbabwe are illuminated in this chapter. These are studies on gender and feminist issues.

Chapter three

The chapter discusses the feminist theoretical framework that was adopted in this study. The study is underpinned by the liberal feminist and the Transactional Reader Response theories.

Chapter four

The chapter discusses the paradigm, research design and methods used in the data gathering process. The critical and feminist paradigms were discussed as they were the lenses used to view this study. The qualitative case study design was discussed, leading to a discussion of the methods that were used to gather data. In this chapter, I also addressed my subjectivity in the study, as a female researcher pursuing a feminist agenda.

Chapter five

The chapter presents, discusses and analyses lecturers' views on feminist literary texts they were engaged with. In the presentation of data, participants presented views on the way they interpreted the phenomenon under discussion.

Chapter six

The chapter presents, discusses and analyses students' views on feminist literary texts they were engaged with. Students' different views were presented and recorded verbatim.

Chapter seven

The chapter discusses factors influencing lecturers and students' views. Factors like conscientisation, education, religion, generational cohorts, socialisation and patriarchy are presented in this chapter.

Chapter eight

This chapter gives a summary of the findings, contributions to new knowledge, importance of the theories, limitations and recommendations.

1.14 Conclusion

The chapter presents an overview of the structure of the whole thesis. It has also highlighted in summary form the contents of the thesis, thereby mapping a way into the thesis.

The next chapter deals with the literature review.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The fields of gender and feminism have increasingly attracted the attention of researchers. The current study focused on gender attitudes towards feminist literature and more specifically towards feminist literary texts. Local as well as literature from around the globe was sourced to provide a coherent understanding of the phenomenon under discussion.

The purpose of this literature review chapter was to provide the theoretical background, methodologies, previous findings, the rationale and relevance of the current study. Therefore, the literature in this study was used to examine the findings of other researchers and to discover variables relevant to my topic. Findings from the literature were used to identify patterns and themes and to comprehend similarities and differences from Western countries, the African context in general and the Zimbabwean context in particular.

This literature review adopted a thematic approach whereby critical concepts that elucidate the phenomenon were discussed systematically. It illuminates how gender roles are differently constructed and what this implies for gender relations amongst and between men and women, and between boys and girls within different communities (Morojele, 2009). Literature on patriarchy, socialisation, women representation and education, reading literature from a feminist and gendered perspective was also reviewed. Among other issues, the chapter also navigates the active role the education system plays in perpetuating gender constructions through the curricula it produces at different levels in the education system. It also elucidates the role of patriarchy and the process of socialisation in influencing individual attitudes towards women.

The study builds on and contributes to work in gender and feminist literature. Although studies in gender have examined how gender affects individuals' attitudes towards women and how gender affects individuals' attitudes towards feminism, there has not been much significant study on the impact of gender on university lecturers' and students' attitudes towards feminist literary texts written by women. As such, this study investigated university

lecturers' and students' attitudes towards feminist writings. From the views of these participants, the study hoped to get insight into how they viewed feminist ideologies that are observable in the feminist literary texts they were engaged with vis-à-vis their patriarchal orientation.

The study owes a factual and interpretative debt to Chindedza (2012), Chitando (2011), Nyanhongo (2011), Betterncourt, Haase& Bryne (2011), Moyana (2006), Musvoto (2006), Toller and Suter(2005), Hart (2006), Kambarami (2006) and McCracken (2002). These studies looked at gender, feminism and feminist perspectives. In other respects, the study has also benefited from the findings presented by Ralfe (2011), Morojele (2009), Shabalala (2009),Al-Ghafari (1999),Singh(1998) and Maphaha (1996) who have identified that gender attitude towards women is determined by the socialisation process that one goes through in the family, society and at school.

Insufficient analytic attention has been paid on how gender can impact on an individual's attitude towards feminist literary texts written by women. Therefore, I addressed this issue by investigating lecturers and students' views on feminist literary texts written by women.
The following section reviews literature on gender and feminism studies carried out in western countries. Since gender perceptions are at an ideological distance between western and African understanding, I will deal with each separately.

2.2 Gender perceptions in western countries

Liberal feminists argue that there is inequality in the treatment of men and women by society. They hold the view that women are not given the same opportunities as men; as a result, women are accorded a second class status. These are the issues that many researchers of feminism and gender studies are addressing. The researchers are concerned with how women and men view each other in different societies. On this issue of gender, Bettencourt, Haase and Byrne (2011) carried out a study in the United States of America. They explored gender attitudes towards feminism between intergenerational groups of family members in United States College students and their older relatives. Their studies suggest that gender had nothing to do with attitudes towards feminism but that other variables come into play. Their study investigated how variables like gender, religion, education, generational cohorts and

others affected individuals' perceptions towards feminism. On the contrary, the current study focused on the views of lecturers' and students' attitudes towards selected feminist literary texts. It was from these views that variables like religion, education, and generational cohorts arose. These came out when the study was addressing its major critical research questions: What are lecturers and students' views towards feminist literary texts and why do they hold these views? Whatever the difference in approach and focus of these two studies, the study by Betterncourt et al.provides an insight into this current study because some of the variables like religion, education and generational cohorts they focused on were observed as influencing lecturers and students' views on the feminist literary texts they were engaged with. In their study, they found out that generational cohorts tend to display common views or attitudes based on a shared historical and social context. Furthermore, Bettencourt et al.'s (2011) study established that perhaps the nature of college life provides a critical setting in which university students begin to question and embrace new opinions from university courses and women's studies in particular.

Some studies exploring feminism in Western countries which have concentrated on college students established that attending college tends to have a liberalising effect on individuals in several realms related to gender attitudes (Bryant, 2003). In other words, the studies identified education as one of the key factors that influenced university students' attitudes towards feminism. Their findings differ from those carried out in Sub-Saharan Africa where negative attitudes towards females are influenced by the way an individual is socialised, at home, society and at school. Most studies carried out in Sub-Saharan Africa were carried out on primary and secondary school pupils and most studies cited above were carried out with university students in Western countries. Therefore, this might account for the difference in the results yielded.

On the same issue on gender, McCracken (2002) also carried out a study with undergraduate students at a university in the United States of America. He wanted to find out how gender influences the interpretation of literary texts, that is, to find out whether males and females read texts differently. McCracken (2002) was surprised by the results he got from his male and female students. From the reading they had done, he had expected male students to side with male characters and female students to side with female characters. He had assumed that patriarchy was still dominating in these young adults but then, he discovered that patriarchy and gender had no place whatsoever in that generation. In fact, what he found out were

generational cohorts that were discriminatory in their thinking. The results of his study are similar to those of Bettencourt et al. (2011).In addition, the results of their studies differ from the studies carried out in Sub-Saharan Africa as has been discussed above. McCracken's study is relevant to the current study in the sense that, both studies were carried out with university students but this current study went a step further to investigate both lecturers and students' views on the feminist literary texts they were engaged with. He also found out that patriarchy had no hold at all on that generation of university students. Most of the responses that the researcher got were from the students' journals. The researcher observed that, male students supported the murder of a husband by a wife. He observed that, generational cohorts are one factor that contributed to the interpretation of texts and not the students' sex. McCracken (2002) is the only researcher who made use of a reflective journal. A reflective journal gives a participant the freedom to express his/her feelings freely without fear of being criticised by others. This gives credit to his findings.

In Iran the case is different from those presented above where students develop liberal ideas from gender courses they engage with at university. Bashirieh (2002) asserts that most of the universities in Iran are too conservative to be open to new ideas and theories and neither a critical theory nor feminism is desired. Sociology courses seldom teach or talk about feminism. Ghandehari (2004) further explains that male colleagues are sometimes against these theories and think it is unscientific to use such theories or feminist research methods when doing surveys. In such a milieu, gender related issues are not the prime subjects of research and all students, including female students, learn male-centered theories. However, feminist activists had to struggle for women's studies to be established. Forouzan (2003) asserts that women's studies in Iranian universities caused some positive changes. The most significant contribution of this field to the social sciences is its ability to describe women's situation in Iran and reveal their problems. Men, especially young men, are no longer considered to be women's enemies, as their attitudes towards gender studies have changed. However, some studies have established that lecturers who are not positive about feminism do not assign students to work on women's issues.

In a study cited by Toller and Stuter (2005) on men's and women's attitudes towards "feminists" and "housewives," Haddock and Zanna (2003) found that men in America assessed feminists more negatively than housewives. Haddock and Zanna categorised these men as "highly authoritarian" because they presented the strongest negative attitude towards

feminists because the value structures of feminists contradict the value structures of highly authoritarian men. This study differs from the studies cited above that showed that attitudes towards feminism have nothing to do with an individual's gender. However, the study by Haddock and Zanna showed that the gender of an individual had an impact on his negative attitude towards feminists. The difference might be that, the other researches were carried out with university students and the study by Haddock and Zanna was carried out with male adults who were not university students. The idea of authority that was alluded to by Haddock and Zanna points to male superiority which stems from patriarchy.

On the same issue on negative attitudes towards feminists, Valiente (1995) found that in Spain, people who do gender studies are viewed as feminists and this is a practical obstacle for the development of research on gender and society because being a feminist is regarded negatively by society .Thus, it is understandable that very few Spanish scholars openly define themselves as feminist researchers.

2.2.1 Patriarchy in countries outside Africa

Some scholars found that in Spain, women occupy subordinate positions in society in comparison with men and this stems from patriarchal ideologies. These scholars argue that this subordination should be reversed. However, Valiente (1995) contends that some researchers have found that decision-making has taken dramatic changes in the past three decades in Spain. Family life is currently based much less on wives' and children's obedience to husbands/fathers and more on dialogue and negotiation between family members. As a result, large percentages of both sexes believe that household and caring tasks should be shared between both members of the couple. However in practice, the sole responsibility of many men is to serve as the breadwinner, while women, whether workers or homemakers take responsibility for most domestic and care work (Bose& Minjeong, 2009).This is further exacerbated at school where researchers have identified some areas where sexist practices exist. These are: textbooks, curriculum, teacher's actions in the classroom and interaction among students. Morojele's study in Africa also identified these variables as enablers of gender stereotyping in schools. The current study found that the university undergraduate English curriculum is dominated by male authors, which points to the fact that lecturers

prefer male to feminist authors. These studies in Africa and Spain show that patriarchy has influence on individuals.

Although studies in Spain have shown that there is negotiation and dialogue between family members, in Iran unequal rights between husband and wife are blatantly enforced. The Iranian family law brings women under the control of men. Men retain most legal rights not only around issues of marriage and divorce but also for women's personal rights such as making travel decisions for themselves. In this case, it is important to understand that underlying patriarchal culture works with the seemingly neutral family policies to reinforce gender inequality. The deep-seated patriarchal culture places women in a subordinate status within the larger family structure, and sometimes subjects women to marital violence ranging from wife battering to rape. Most feminist literature in India defines violence against women as any form of coercion, power, or control perpetrated against a woman by her intimate partner or extended kin and includes physical, sexual, verbal and mental abuse. Most of the academic analyses of violence against women which are from a feminist perspective focus on the cultural and structural context of violence. Analyses of wife battering in India show how some physical abuse is justified by batterers and their families as culturally appropriate ways of maintaining authority and control over a woman's behaviour(Krishnan,2005).Cultural justification for wife battering is grounded in patriarchal relations that include disobedience, shirking house-hold duties, or wife's bad temperament, conflict with or disrespect shown to her parents-in-law, doubts about a wife's fidelity or disobeying a husband(Mohan,1990). Most researches point all this to patriarchal ideologies.

The studies carried out in India and Zimbabwe on wife battering produced the same results. This indicates how patriarchy has influenced different societies globally. In the Shona culture in Zimbabwe, wife battering is culturally permitted just as in India. The current study has shown that both male and female participants condemn wife battering and they blame patriarchy for such practices.

However, all the studies carried out indicate that patriarchal ideologies are inherent in different societies. This concurs with Chancer and Watkins' (2006) argument that most European and American countries still remain male-dominated.

After reviewing gender perceptions in countries outside Africa, it is important to also review gender in Africa as the study was carried out in Zimbabwe.

2.3 Gender perceptions in Africa

2.3.1 Gender stereotyping

Africa is notorious for its patriarchal values. The waves of feminism that started in western countries did not spare Sub-Saharan Africa. Literature on feminism spread to Africa during the nineteenth century. Researchers from Sub-Saharan Africa saw the need to research on gender issues. An example is Morojele's (2009) research in Lesotho, where he studied how parents, teachers and pupils living in and around the schools where he was carrying out his study reason, perform, and feel in relation to gender in their academic and social realities and the denotations they construct to being girls and boys. So, the fact that there was a female principal in one of his male participant's (teacher) school was not in conflict with how Basotho boys and girls were socialised. It was not surprising therefore that the male participant was uncomfortable with this arrangement.

Like Morojele, Maphaha (1996) in a study she carried out in South Africa on gender perceptions towards female principals, also found out through interviews, that male and female students had negative attitudes towards female principals. Their studies showed that their participants were not hesitant to openly show their ill-feelings towards female principals. These researches were carried in different eras; Maphaha's study was carried out in the twentieth century in South Africa and Morojele's in the twenty-first century in Lesotho. Their studies were carried out on primary and secondary school teachers and pupils respectively.They focused on gender attitudes towards women. This current research focused on gender attitudes towards literary   works written by women. My study was carried out with university lecturers and students, in the twenty-first century in Zimbabwe, five years after Morojele's study and sixteen years after Maphaha's study.

Another stereotypical perception that Morojele (2009) found contradictory in his study is the 'softer' and 'gentler' attributes that are given to girls by society. In the schools where he carried out his study, he found out that girls had developed a stance of protecting themselves against boys by fighting them. Therefore, girls in Morojele's study mostly engaged in such

fights as a means to defend themselves. When the researcher asked one of the girls who had witnessed the fight, she said; *we are tired of these boys; they always beat us when we pass by. And we must beat them so they will fear us.* These girls showed resistance.

In support of Morojele's findings on girls being violent, a study carried out by Gill and Remahl (2005) found that women in Sweden cause violence to their male partners. They claimed that, Swedish women strike first and they resort to violence just like men. However, Gill and Remahl assert that, this is something that is beginning in Sweden. To add on to Gill and Remahl's claims, Strauss (2007) confronted American society by presenting results that claimed that high rates of violence were found in American families and that wives were as violent as husbands. On the same issue, Kimmel (2002) also claims that, there are one hundred realistic studies and reports that suggest that rates of domestic violence are the same(men and women causing violence). As a result, such claims have posed challenges to feminists on the claims of violence against women since they claim that women are always violated by men (Hester, 2010).

However, feminist proponents have since responded that women's violent deeds are committed in self-protection. This has been found to be one of the women's chief reasons for using violence (Bair-Merrit, et al., 2010).Saunders (2002) asserts that women resort to violence after they have exhausted all available sources of assistance, when they feel stuck and because of fear for their lives. So, Morojele's study that girls committed violent acts has been proved to be true as has been shown in the studies by Strauss (2007), Gill and Remahl (2005) and Kimmel (2002). This concurs with feminist researchers, Bair-Merrit, et al. (2010) and Saunders's (2002) findings that women do commit violent acts because they want to protect themselves from being violated by men. So, the social construct of stereotyping women as weak has been proved wrong by these studies.

The next section discusses gender socialisation.

2.3.2 **Gender socialisation**

Gender socialisation has been found to influence men and women on how they view each other in society. The socialisation process has been blamed by gender critics like Lober

(2012) among many others, as the main cause of negative attitudes developed by individuals towards the opposite sex. This stems from the way girls and boys are socialised into roles in the family, the society and the school. The following studies were carried out on gender socialisation by different researchers in Africa.

Studies carried out by Al-Ghafari (1999), Morojele (2009), and Singh (1998) found that society normally presents women and men as having distinctive roles, and that it is society that inculcates individuals' values, norms and beliefs. Morojele (2009) cites Butler (1990) who argues that gender is viewed as a socially constructed process which is impeccably invested with power but also a process that we do or perform. Ralfe (2011) adds that gender relies heavily on culture and cultural practices. Society determines the position, what is considered acceptable behaviour, and what the expectations are of its male and female members. In other words, "a culture constructs and sustains meanings of gender by investing biological sex with social significance" (Wood, 2001, p. 22). The belief that a male is superior to a female is instilled in an individual at a tender age. The researcher's findings from the interviews they carried out reveal that this belief manifests in the individual as he/she grows into adulthood. Maphaha's (1996) findings from questionnaires and interviews revealed that males have a negative attitude towards whatever is done by a woman. In her research, where she was investigating gender attitudes towards female principals, she found that socialisation has got to do with the manner in which societies inculcate norms and beliefs of their own to individuals.

Boys are made to believe that women are inferior to men, so, the influence of socialisation is bound to have a negative impact on anything a woman does. Her research findings from the interviews and the questionnaires indicate that boys have negative attitudes towards women leaders.

Chitando (2011) in her study, states that gender denotes the socially allocated roles between women and men in society. She cites Simone de Beauvoir in **The Second Sex** where Beauvoir plainly puts it, 'one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.' She argues that across all societies, women have been constructed as inferior to men. It is society that proposes and monitors the behaviour of women and men. Just like in Morojele's (2009) study, girls never fought boys in the presence of their teachers for fear of being labeled

deviant. She further explains that it can therefore be appreciated that gender is dependent on social beliefs and customs.

2.3.3 Schools as agents of perpetuating gender stereotyping and gender socialisation

The school should be viewed as an agent of social change. It should not promote gender inequality through the curricula it gives to pupils. Likewise, universities should also be seen as sites for social transformation through their curricula. However, studies carried out in Africa have shown that schools act as sites of promoting gender inequality and perpetuating patriarchal ideologies. Morojele (2009) and Singh's (1998) studies found that schools are acting exemplify that formal schooling played the role of socialising girls into gender roles and attitudes that they (girls) were expected to perform later in life. However, Morojele (2009) found that through 'moments of praxis' girls performed gender in ways that challenged and falsified dominant values of gender, as a result of the active part that teachers played to inscribe dominant values of gender. Morojele's study found that girls' inventive challenges of dominant constructions of gender took place during informal schooling encounters. Conversely, during formal schooling processes, girls felt compelled to succumb to dominant values of femininity such as being polite, reserved and modest.

On the school as an agent of reinforcing gender inequality, Al-Ghafari (1999) echoes Morojele's (2009) sentiments by holding the school responsible for producing and reproducing gender socialisation. He observes that the school is also a means for the diffusion of societal beliefs, norms and beliefs. On the same issue, Singh (1998) in her investigation on teaching gender in English literature concurs with Al-Ghafari that the school is responsible for reproducing gender socialisation. She cites Hellesten (1994) who reiterates that, school readers are chosen by authorities to guide pupils into 'acceptable social role.' On the same issue, she also cites Baker and Freebody (1998) who add that, in this way, texts develop pupils' self-concept as they promote desired norms and values.

Singh (1998) carried out a study in one of the schools in South Africa and found that the school readers perpetuated gender socialisation. In her observations, she discovered that pupils together with their teacher agreed that females are weak and soft as they were portrayed in the literature texts they were reading.

On the role of books, Gordon (2000) concurs with other researchers that textbooks also play a big part in propagating the exposure of Zimbabwean pupils to gender stereotypes. In a study of 42 primary school textbooks used in Zimbabwe, the following was found out:

> *negative representations of women as housewives who cook and clean and nag their children and husbands. An absolute preponderance of women associated with children and men associated with property. In social studies, teachers are openly advised to encourage gender stereotyping. The father is the provider and takes important decisions. The mother is the housewife and supporter of the father. No other roles are ever acknowledged* (**Brickhill, 1996, p. 22).**

It seems though that the prime socialisation to which children are exposed in the home is strengthened in schools through subject stereotyping and learning materials. Gordon (2000) observed that in Zimbabwe, secondary school boys' attitudes, beliefs about and views of girls and women suggest that traditional opinions of gender are merged with those which boys acquire in school. This also applies to other Sub-Saharan regions as has been shown above. An important characteristic of education which channels children into gender roles is the curriculum they study.

To further elaborate on socialisation, Ralfe (2011) cites Morojele (2009) who, in his study showed that gender inequality is underpinned by both male and female teachers and boys in the classroom. This indicates that societal forces and culture spill over into the classroom environment and undermine gender equity. On the same point on societal influence, Maphaha (1996) indicated that a negative attitude of boys towards the female principal was a result of parental influence. This is contrary to Betterncourt et al. (2011) who found out that in the United States of America, parental influence has nothing to do with the students' attitudes towards feminism.

The current study differs from the other researchers' studies carried out in Sub-Saharan Africa in the sense that it focused on gender perceptions of feminist literary texts. It was carried out with university students and lecturers as respondents, whereas the other studies were conducted using secondary school teachers and pupils. However, their study focused on

gender attitudes towards females in general but my study goes a step further to explore gender attitudes towards feminist works written by women. These literary texts are chosen by lecturers at the university. This might mean that lecturers at the university can also perpetuate inequality between males and females through the literary texts they choose for their students. That is the reason why Maphaha blames the school for reinforcing gender inequality by choosing readers that reinforce gender inequality. Therefore, this study got insights from Morojele, Maphaha and Singh's studies on the role played by teachers in choosing a curriculum for pupils.

After reviewing literature on gender in Africa in general, it is also important to review literature on gender in Zimbabwe in particular, since it is the setting for the study.

2.4. Gender perceptions in Zimbabwe

The following studies on gender perceptions were carried out in Zimbabwe.

2.4.1 The Zimbabwean school as a site for reinforcing gender stereotyping

On institutions of education as sites for reinforcing gender stereotyping, Chabaya and Gudhlanga (2003) explain the role of the school in perpetuating gender stereotyping. They argue that teachers' roles should be seen as implementers in imparting knowledge, culture and life skills; in fact, they are the key representatives of social transformation. So, the curriculum they choose for pupils should be gender sensitive, to achieve this. Teachers are accountable for the major changes that take place in learners' social, attitudinal, emotional and mental beings. They can influence the students' worldview. Teachers should therefore be educated to address world-wide and local concerns in the classroom.

Giroux and McLaren (1996) argue that change begins in the classroom and then moves outward as students live outside the classroom. Schools have the authority to examine and change the unfair societal norms. It is thus critical that education be regarded as a tool to empower students to become critical citizens. On the issue of the schools as perpetuators of gender stereotyping constructs, Mutekwe and Mutekwe (2012) argue that for centuries, books have been viewed as sources for the transmission of culture, mores, values and ideologies or

societal beliefs, in general, and more specifically, for the socialisation of children into their gender role categories.

The above has been echoed by researchers like Nhundu (2007) and Mutekwe (2007) who have shown that books often unconsciously strengthen the gender role philosophy and expectations and this often culminates in the gender stereotyping of school subjects and professions. Given this role of text books in propagating the gender ideology, they argue that the same books have the potential to lessen the dissemination of these gender role philosophies and the stereotyping of subjects and occupations if appropriate measures are put in place to critique these stereotypes and ideologies (Nhundu, 2007). It is in this connection that Nhundu (2007) maintains that children's books epitomise a very powerful vehicle for the socialisation of children in ways that have central implications for identity expansion and future educational and career ambitions. The stories and characters or models portrayed in many children's books in Zimbabwe often depict females and males in gender roles customarily stereotyped as either masculine or feminine (Gaidzanwa, 2010). Mutekwe and Mutekwe (2012) draw on the ideas of Delamont (2000) to argue that there is a serious need to eradicate the gender role stereotypes and prejudices rampant in school curricular material if the Zimbabwean school curriculum designers wish to achieve a truthful position in terms of gender sensitivity in education. They criticise the portrayal in much of the literature or textbooks of girls and women as either housekeepers, secretaries, cooks or nurses, while boys and men are regularly portrayed as technicians, engineers, scientists or surgeons because this often relegates girls and women to minor roles or render them invisible in certain roles and domains of life (Momsen, 2006).

Drawing on the above argument, Mutekwe and Mutekwe (2012) concur with feminist writers (Dale, Esland, Ferguson & McDonald, 2000) who see schools in general and textbooks in particular as playing a philosophical function in order to engender, strengthen and replicate patriarchy in society. In Zimbabwe, the influence of books in propagating patriarchy is often compounded by teacher attitudes and expectations towards their learners. Zimbabwean feminist scholar, Nhundu (2007) shares similar sentiments that the gender ideology embodied in the curriculum makes girls to be disadvantaged compared to boys. Mutekwe and Modiba (2012) add that existing literature on gender imbalances in the Zimbabwean school curriculum tends to point to the influence of books in perpetuating the patriarchal ideology and gender stereotyping (Nhundu, 2007). According to this view, teachers are among the

culprits who reinforce some of these gender role stereotypes. Meyer (2008) writing from a feminist standpoint shares these sentiments maintaining that the patriarchal values inherent in the Zimbabwean school curriculum make girls to be deprived compared to boys.

The above studies have relevance to this study because the current study was carried out using Bachelor of Education undergraduate students who are going to be teachers. The current study hopes to conscientise these teachers on the importance of discussing women's issues in a positive manner and also to appreciate that studying feminist literary texts in universities and schools can contribute to the appreciation of women's works in a patriarchal society like Zimbabwe where women are treated as 'second class citizens.' The feminist and critical paradigms that were adopted in this study advocate for transformation. The feminist literary texts address gender issues that have become topical globally; therefore, the university lecturers and students have the capacity to change the status quo in the English curriculum.

Literature reviewed has shown that most studies of this kind have been carried out in schools in Zimbabwe and the university curricula have never been the focus of many Zimbabwean researchers, hence the significance of this study, for it focuses on the English curriculum at university level. Juxtaposing the school and the university curricula indicates that there is need for researchers to pay attention to both curricula. This study could not have been done at a more optune time than this one, when Zimbabwean feminist and gender activists are advocating for a gender sensitive curriculum in schools. Amongst its other goals, though not the focus, the study hoped to conscientise curricula developers on the need to look at the English curricula at university level. This study holds the assumption that the undergraduate English curriculum at the selected university has inadequate feminist literary texts. This might also be the same situation in other universities and in other curricula besides the English curriculum. Such studies should be done at institutions of higher learning in Zimbabwe.

2.4.3 Gender socialisation: the Zimbabwean context

Socialisation in Zimbabwe has been found to be the main factor that influences the way men and women view each other in society. Chitando (2011) argues that:

The toys that parents buy for their children also aid the socialisation process, for instance, a girl child is given dolls or kitchen utensils to play with whilst the boy child is given toy cars, puzzle games and all toys that require physical energy or mental ability. As a result, the girl child is socialised to become a mother, soft, emotionally sensitive, and to have all motherhood features. Furthermore, boys who cry easily, are shy or avoid fights are often scolded by their parents for behaving like girls. The socialisation process in the family which instils patriarchal practices into the young does not end within the family but infiltrates into the other social institutions like marriage, religion, education, politics and the economy (**p.8**).*

Therefore, the socialisation process affects individuals even in the choices they make later in life. The boy is socialised into being superior to the girl whilst the girl occupies an inferior position. As a result, a superiority complex will be developed in the boy-child and on the other hand, the girl develops an inferiority complex.

On the issue of the effects of socialisation on individuals, Rutoro, Jenjekwa and Runyowa (2012) argue that, culture, through the socialisation process, conveys some gendered misunderstandings about males and females. A critical look at the Shona culture shows the process of socialisation. Rutoro et al., cite Rutoro (2012) in her doctoral dissertation who discussed the socialisation process in the Shona culture:

In Zimbabwe, there are certain gendered choices available to a person from the time of one's birth. The socialisation process is the root of gender based challenges societies are facing today. Due to the gender based socialisation, girls are socialised for a low status in life and boys are socialised for a higher status. For girls this is done, "through restricting girls' activities to such an extent that their social development and exploration instincts are curtailed." This affects the girl's choices even in later life as a grown up woman (**p.12**).

Rutoro's (2012) argument is affirmed in the feminist literary texts that were used in this study, where girls are restricted in many areas of social life while boys are left to do what

they want. At the end of the day, the girl suffers doubly, before marriage and in marriage, because of the restrictions put on girls and women during socialisation.

Gender socialisation has been described by different researchers as the basis for women's oppression. Today, many women in Zimbabwe find themselves in difficult situations, not out of choice but society forced them to be where they are. In most cases, women suffer because society thinks they are incapable. Society does not give them the chance to prove their capabilities. Beasley (1999) argues that society eliminates women on the basis of the false belief that women are, by nature, less capable than men and do not share the same sensible nature as men.

Chitando (2011) in the same vein concurs with other researchers that the societal construction of women and men has never been innocent. Her research was carried out in Zimbabwe. She analysed texts written by African women writers. She cites Onyango (2006) who argues that in most societies, men have been socialised to regulate and control women, politically, socially and economically. Chitando further explains that, on the other hand, women have been socialised to be docile to men. Through complex socialisation processes, male supremacy has been portrayed as the normal order of things.

The socialisation process goes through stages. The first stage is in the family and the second is in society and the third stage is at school. The gender role perceptions in the family are often propagated by schools, colleges and universities through secondary socialisation (Berzin, 2010). Morojele's (2009) study shows that teachers, both male and females are perpetuators of gendered socialisation. As a consequence, they have the potential not only to create a superiority or inferiority complex in students but also to strengthen a self-fulfilling prophecy (Plata, 2011). This means that schools and colleges have the power to either build or destroy students' ambitions.

Meyer (2008) emphasises the effect of the social environment and suggests that, even the expert development of teachers is a result of their cumulative experiences throughout their profession starting from the training stage. Many feminist writers on the Zimbabwean school curriculum have tended to attribute the issue of gender insensitivity to the curriculum inherited by Zimbabwe at independence in 1980 claiming that it was moulded on the English system (Kwinjeh, 2007). However, Showalter (1993) affirms that in America, the increased

influence of feminist perspectives within the university has led to numerous changes in literary works, in curricula organisation and in the publication of articles and books. Some three hundred colleges and universities now offer degree programmes in women's studies.

After reviewing literature on gender, it is important to review literature on patriarchy because Zimbabwe is a patriarchal nation. The study is viewed through the liberal feminist lens and feminists believe that women oppression stems from patriarchy. The following were the researches that were carried in Zimbabwe and how patriarchy has impacted on the girl-child and women.

2. 5. Patriarchy: the Zimbabwean context

Studies carried out in Zimbabwe indicate that patriarchy is still rooted in Zimbabwe despite the wave of feminism that has hit the country. Some women agent groups emerged in Zimbabwe to address the situation of the girl-child and women. One such group is the 'Musasa project.' This group has made strides in a bid to address women's problems. Although the situation has improved for women and girls, women' sexuality is still being controlled by society, the reason being that women's sexuality is supposed to be closely controlled because patriarchy interprets it as dangerous (Chitando, 2011). She argues that the main reason why women are considered as dangerous in society is the awareness that they have the ability to challenge the patriarchal presentation of reality. She adds that patriarchy has sought to project women's inferior position as normal and everlasting. Alternatively, feminist writers and critics have exposed patriarchal authority that places men at the centre of reality.

Chindedza (2012) concurs with Chitando (2011) that feminist writers explore themes that contest dominant patriarchal beliefs. Chindedza further adds that the female characters they portray defy societal norms and values to set themselves free from patriarchal bondage. Feminist writers have challenged male supremacy. They have shown that women can achieve a lot on their own, as long as men stop repressing them. Such authors are considered dangerous as they allow other women to realise that a world punctuated by gender fairness is possible. Musvoto (2006) concurs with Chitando's arguments that patriarchal conventions have inhibited women's ability to achieve in male-dominated sectors of the economy and the

government. Public proclamations glorifying women's roles as mothers and wives have encouraged women to stay at home and raise children rather than go into the workforce or pursue more training. Liberal feminists believe that women are not given enough chance to showcase themselves because society thinks women are not as capable as men, so their place should be in the kitchen.

On the same issue of patriarchy, Kambarami (2006) argues that patriarchal practices within the Zimbabwean Shona culture perpetuate gender unfairness and strip women of who they are because tradition in Africa is stronger than domination, law and religion. Customary practices have been fused into religion and eventually have come to be believed by their practitioners, to be demanded by their adopted gods, whoever they may be (Okome, 2003, p.71). Kambarami (2006) further explains that patriarchal attitudes are reared in the family through the socialisation process. The family, as a social organisation, is a brewery for patriarchal practices by socialising the young to accept sexually distinguished roles. In the Shona culture, from a tender age, the socialisation process distinguishes the girl child from the boy child. Shona males are socialised to view themselves as wage earners and heads of households whilst females are taught to be respectful and submissive housekeepers. The cause of such differentiation and perception is the fact that society views women as sexual beings and not as human beings. As a result, women are socialised to attain those qualities, which fit them into a relationship of reliance on men. These qualities include gentleness, passivity, obedience and struggling to please men always. However, Morojele (2009) found that in practice, women are not gentle and submissive as society expects them to be.

Kambarami (2006) further explains that patriarchal attitudes are also found in Christianity and these have been further heightened by the fact that the woman (Eve) was formed from the rib taken from man (Adam). This story that surrounds the creation of humanity has made women occupy a subservient position in the Church and in the family as well. It is because of this scenario that women are viewed as second class citizens. Such patriarchal attitudes have seen women being forced to be obedient to males. Women's situation is made worse by the fact that it was the woman (Eve) who made the man (Adam) to sin in the Garden of Eden. This portrayal of women as the feebler sex makes men to supervise women in every facet of their lives, lest they cause havoc. Men use the verses found in Colossians in the bible to oppress women where women are instructed to submit themselves to men. They use this as a justification to control women. The feminist literary texts that were used in this study portray

female characters who do not submit to men. In fact, these female characters fight against men. This is unacceptable in a male-dominated society like Zimbabwe. Therefore, the study investigated how university lecturers and students react to such themes and female character portrayal in a patriarchal society like Zimbabwe.

Kambarami (2006) further explains that the male-controlled nature of the Zimbabwean society has moulded and perpetuated gender variation to the extent of allowing male control and female subordination. This sad state of affairs has been powered by the socialisation process, therefore, to change the situation, this call for re-socialisation. She adds that women should also be educated so that they understand how culture incarcerates them since the majority of them have acknowledged the status quo to the extent that they worship male domination (internalised racism). Kambarami (2006) laments that, the family is a main social institution and if this re-socialisation starts in the family, it will spill over into the other societal institutions. In addition, laws should be made and policies revised so as to accommodate women. In order for these changes to happen it needs desire, determination and commitment of everybody in society, man or woman (a re-education and re-socialisation of both males and females).Liberal feminists advocate for a re-socialisation of society and the integration of women into the mainstream through legislation.

Kambarami (2006) continues to argue that, the patriarchal Zimbabwean society also positioned women in subservient roles in the family. A woman would not own property; in fact, she was amongst the man's property. However, the situation in Zimbabwe is changing now; women can own property even after the death of a husband. The society is gradually beginning to realise that women should also benefit from the toils of the husband. It is against this background that this study was carried out when women's efforts are being rewarded in Zimbabwe and negative attitudes towards women are changing. Feminists believe that women oppression stems from patriarchy. Therefore, the following section reviews literature on patriarchy in Zimbabwe. The study is viewed through the liberal feminist lens and feminists believe that women oppression stem from patriarchy. The following were the researches that were carried in Zimbabwe on how patriarchy has impacted on the girl-child and women.

2.5.1 Patriarchy and the girl-child's education

The education of the girl-child was never considered seriously in Zimbabwe. The woman's place has always been in the kitchen. If she was ever to go to school, it was for her to be able to write a letter to her prospective husband. However, since independence, the education of the girl-child is being given due attention. The following researches were carried out on the situation of the girl-child and women's education in Zimbabwe.

Kambarami (2006) explains that during the colonial era there were limited mission and government schools and Africans could access education at mission schools only. These schools were not enough to cater for all African children's education. Patriarchal attitudes coupled with inadequate financial resources, made African parents opt to send male children to school. The girl-child was put at a disadvantage; her intelligence did not matter at all. On this issue of the education of the girl-child, in *Nervous Conditions* (1988),one of the literary texts that was used in this study, Tambudzai, the protagonist, could not succumb to this favouritism, and she was determined to send herself to school when her father decided to send Nhamo, the boy-child in her family because there were inadequate resources. She grows maize to raise money to send herself to school. It was painful for the girl-child to be marginalised to that extent, which is why the protagonist did not feel sorry when her brother died; it was bitterness because of the treatment she was given as a girl-child in the family.

Kambarami (2006) goes on to explain that, this state of affairs positioned the African girl-child at a great disadvantage as far as education was concerned. She gives the following statistics; by 1971, only 43, 5% of black children of school going age were in school of which only 3, 9% were in secondary school. A very small number of black children reached Form 4 and Form 6 level and of those who did, girls were very few. For example, only 19 black girls were in Form 6 in 1971 showing how women were marginalised in High School education (Gordon, 2000). The number of female students at the only University, which was in Zimbabwe at independence, has always been very low. This was not because women were less intelligent than men but was an outcome of the patriarchal nature of the Zimbabwean society which adored male dominance and kept women subordinated (Moyana, 2006). The situation is no longer the same because of feminist activism in Zimbabwe; great strides have been made to grant equal educational opportunities to girls and boys.

However, this initiative is highly commendable but the schools in Zimbabwe continue to play a significant role in perpetuating and reinforcing patriarchal attitudes through the curriculum especially through learning materials as alluded to by Mutekwe and Mobida (2012), Chauraya and Manyike (2014) and Mutekwe and Mobida (2013). They noted that school textbooks reinforce heavily stereotyped images of men and women with women taking low profiles and having traits of passivity and dependency on men, lack intelligence and leadership qualities.

Ten years after independence, the university reflected a very low female percentage, as a result of the patriarchal nature of the Zimbabwean society which encouraged male dominance and retained women subordination (Chauraya & Manyike, 2014). In a bid to raise the number of female students at the University of Zimbabwe, the government introduced the Affirmative Action Policy in 1993 where girls entered university with points lower than their male counterparts. This further perpetuated in the girls' mind the superiority of males and the subordinate role they occupied even in education. This enculturation develops a superiority complex in the male who thinks he should dominate in all cases. Women have struggled for space in a patriarchal system. For example, the girl child continues to be deprived in terms of access to education and employment opportunities. However, the situation seems to have changed now because in Zimbabwe, girls and boys now have equal access to education. At the university where this current study was carried out, the number of female students is almost equal to the number of male students, showing that women now also have access to higher institutions of learning in Zimbabwe. Inaddition, many women now have almost the same employment opportunities as men although men still dominate in most areas.

Chitando (2011) affirms that gender relations in present-day Zimbabwe continue to be biased in favour of men. Zimbabwean men wield power in the various aspects of life. Chitando seems to be alluding to the fact that education can be one way in which women can liberate themselves from male-domination as is shown in the feminist literary texts under study. In a patriarchal society like Zimbabwe, this might not be very true. Education has not given educated women in Zimbabwe total freedom in any form although some improvements are being noticed now. So, many educated women in Zimbabwe find themselves in the same situation like those in the feminist texts under study. On this issue, Chirimuuta (2006) argues that this is due to the fact that even those women who are educated have to surrender to culture otherwise they get labelled as 'Unmarriageable' and will be rejected by 'prospective

partners.' Chirimuuta's argument here is echoed in Dangarembga's (a Zimbabwean feminist writer) *Nervous Conditions,* (a literary text under study) where Maiguru, as educated as she is, is not in control of her salary. As a woman, she has no control of what she works for, and even with her Master's degree, she is supposed to play the role of the submissive wife. She has to work for the good of her husband's extended family. This is what patriarchy does to Zimbabwean women; even the educated ones are not emancipated. However, the situation seems to be improving now as men are beginning to accept that the wife should also be in control of what she works for but play the role of a 'good wife.'

The above sentiments on the negative impact of patriarchy on women are a revelation of what transpires in a society that is male-dominated. Women's efforts are not recognised at all. The study, through engaging university lecturers and students with feminist literary texts written by women, hoped to give an insight into the importance of adding more feminist literary texts to the undergraduate English curriculum.Observations made by researchers above are very critical to the current study. Patriarchy has been seen as the dominant ideology used in decisions about women. However, as has been suggested by Kambarami above, higher institutions of learning should be made the first port of call for re-socialisation. So, such feminist literary texts should be seen as the way forward in trying to re-address women's issues. Therefore, the study advocates for more feminist writings in the English curriculum.

Having reviewed literature on patriarchy in Zimbabwe, it is important to discuss literature reviewed on gender and feminist literature because this study focused on gender attitudes towards feminist literature in general and feminist literary texts in particular. It is important for readers to understand what constitutes feminist literature.

2.6 Gender and feminist literature

Feminist literature presents female characters as agents of feminism. Feminist literature stories present women as completely realised characters' faculties, wishes, aggressions, desires and struggles (Snodgrass, 2014). Snodgrass (2014) defines feminist literature as literature grounded on the principles of feminism and refers to any literary work that centres on the struggle for women's equal opportunities and to be accepted as human beings. She further explains that not all feminist literature has been written by women but also by men

who understood women beyond the roles they were anticipated to fit into and delved into their consciousness to understand their needs and wishes. Some works may be imaginary, whilst others may be non-imaginary. However, this study focused on feminist fictional literature written by women only. Although Snodgrass's (2014) definition includes men, I want to believe that men cannot articulate women's problems adequately because they are not directly affected. To say men can articulate women's problems is just as good as asking them to describe labour pains. The description of labour pains by men is just second hand information. Likewise, I would also want to think those men who write in the feminist mode use second hand information; for these reasons, I did not include them in this study. However, this does not weaken Snodgrass's definition.

Snodgrass (2014) further states that writers of feminist literature are known to understand and explain the variance between sex and gender. They believe that though a person's sex is preset and natural, it is gender that has been created by society along with a particular awareness about gender roles. Gender roles, they believe, can be changed over time. The predominance of one gender over the other is a common notion across almost all societies and the fact that it is not in favour of women is a fundamental yet blatant characteristic of feminist women's literature. The female protagonist is self-confident and it is one clear characteristic of the feminist approach towards literature.

Snodgrass (2014) goes further to explain that women in literature of the feminist nature are always presented as the heroines, who, more often than not, do not really take the outdated role of women as decided by society. They are ready to make their own decision to express this choice of individual decision making and are ready to deal with penalties of these choices, actions and decisions. Snodgrass's description of the female protagonist is a description of the female protagonists in the literary texts under study, that is, *Second Class Citizen (1979) Nervous Conditions (1988)* and *So Long A Letter (1981).*The female protagonists in these texts break from tradition and set themselves free.

Snodgrass further explains that, as a mother, a daughter, a sister, or a wife, any part of feminist literature deals with a woman as a woman. It is not these interactions, roles or stereotypes that give these female characters identity. Their identity is defined by their choices and their beliefs, which are related to these roles. In modern feminist literature, the

attack on a male-dominated society became more direct and straightforward, where women demanded a closer look into the patriarchal and capitalistic approach towards feminism. The following section looks at reading literature from a gendered perspective.

2.7 Reading literature from a gendered perspective: *Nervous Conditions* (1988), *Second Class Citizen* (1979) and *So Long A Letter* (1981)

Nyanhongo (2011) analysed the three literary texts that were used in this study. She looks at patriarchy (tradition) and gender stereotyping as the cause of women's suffering. This starts from the moment the girl-child is brought into this world. The socialisation the girl-child receives from birth makes her a victim of oppression in a society that is dominated by men. The three authors have managed to voice out women's concerns in their novels. Their writings contest dominant patriarchal views. This study investigated gender attitudes towards such literature.

Nyanhongo argues that the issue of women's oppression and empowerment has been one major theme in African literature and research in the last few decades. There is no doubt that this has been a late but necessary response to the realisation that women have been oppressed, overlooked and demeaned for a long period of time. Women suffer in this way as a result of various factors, some of which may be related to out-dated beliefs and practices in their societies. This is often interrelated with forms of racial and economic oppression. This is evident not only in African societies, but also in African literature which mirrors these features of these societies.

Nyanhongo (2011) laments that the multiplicity of women's situations in Africa is extensive and many African women do not regard themselves as feminists because many African women do not want to do away with custom. The three novels have been selected as the focus of this study because they are well-known novels written by prominent African women writers in the feminist tradition. *So Long a Letter* (1981), *Nervous Conditions (*1988) and *Second Class Citizen (1979)* have been widely read and discussed and they also narrate women's experiences.

Nyanhongo (2011) asserts that the arrival of renowned female feminist writers such as Emecheta, Bâ and Dangarembga coupled with the liberation of African countries from colonial powers, has opened space for women to counter-balance and correct stereotyped female descriptions in African literature and post-colonial societies. These writers portray the position of women in Africa as they battle with or surrender to the various forms of traditional oppression that hinder them from achieving personal empowerment. Furthermore, these three women writers explore women's attempts to achieve self-actualisation in the changing societies they inhabit.

Their texts deal with, and often contest their twofold oppression, that is, patriarchy that preceded and continues after colonialism, that engraves the concepts of womanhood, motherhood and also, traditions such as dowry. Maiguru, in *Nervous Conditions* (1988) runs away from her home because she is not allowed to regard herself as her husband's equal, because of the bride price paid for her. But, she is entrapped between societal expectations of a decent woman and the self-will to emancipate herself, but the latter has a strong influence on her and eventually she returns to her husband, to a life of submissiveness and subservience. Her daughter, Nyasha also suffers emotionally due to traditional patriarchal perceptions, in which women are not permitted to rebel against male dominance. In *So Long A Letter (1981)*, Ramatoulaye suffers because her husband takes another wife. Ramatoulaye manages to attain self-actualisation, unlike a woman such as Nnu Ego in *The Joys of Motherhood (1979)* (a text outside this study), who is belittled by her husband's polygamy, but unable to surpass that which confines her. Women may also be forced into early marriages and thus also be deprived of support structures. In the three texts, tradition is one key factor that may constrain some women's potential for empowerment, although on the other hand, it can sometimes contribute to their growth to self-actualisation.

However, although custom is one significant form of oppression, there are a range of others such as the extent to which gender oppression is strengthened by racial and economic oppression. Nyanhongo (2011) argues that women suffer especially because of oppressive cultural traditions, many of which still persist in modern African societies. The oppressive aspects include patriarchy, polygamy and arranged early marriages, sacrificial marriages for the benefit of male children and general relegation of women. Even today, in modern African societies, it is still widely believed that a woman ought to stay at home, provide for the family

and bear children. Furthermore, many women also hope to find inner peace through childbearing.

In *The Joys of Motherhood,* set in a twentieth-century African society, it is evident that Emecheta's female protagonist initially thinks that bearing children is the highest accomplishment of her life. The problem is that, she is hit hard by the burdens of raising a family almost single-handedly, and thus she begins to doubt that she can find inner peace through childbearing. A similar example occurs in *Nervous Conditions* for Tambu's mother believes that bearing and educating a male child will benefit both her and her family, but her dreams are devastated when her son dies. Moreover, the fact that she has no say over her children's lives turns her into a sad mother.

She further explains that these repressive aspects of custom still exist in contemporary societies. Then, in diverse works of African literature and in various African societies everything evil including witchcraft is associated with women. Women continue to be oppressed in other areas of domestic life. Heavy expectations continue to be placed on many African women. For example, they still may be required to carry out household chores and satisfy their men's physical needs, and complement this by bearing male children. Thus, a woman was traditionally expected to submit to her husband's wishes in all these respects, and still this is often the case. Moreover, she was and sometimes is still regarded as part of her husband's property. These perceptions are reflected in African literature. For instance, in *Nervous Conditions,* Tambu's father believes it is a waste of resources to educate her as she will be married and be expected to care for her husband. This is the scenario in most African countries; the girl-child is made to suffer at the hands of patriarchy.

The literary texts that were used in this study challenge such dominant patriarchal values; therefore, the study investigated the attitudes of lecturers and students towards feminist literary texts that portray female characters who challenge patriarchy.

2.7.1 Reading literature from a feminist perspective: differentiating feminist writings from female writings

Literary texts in the feminist mode are those novels that look at women's situations and give alternatives. In these texts, the authors do not just describe the women's plight and leave the situation like that, rather they give alternatives. Their heroines and some female characters are strong women who defy societal norms and values to liberate themselves from patriarchal bondage (Chindedza, 2012). The texts are protestant in that they voice out the voice of the voiceless woman.

Moyana (2006) reads feminist literary texts from a feminist perspective. She sees Dangarembga's **Nervous Conditions** (1988) as falling within the feminist tradition. She maintains that in **Nervous Conditions***,* Tsitsi Dangarembga has portrayed women from a different standpoint from that portrayed in earlier Zimbabwean literature in English. The woman's voice here is significantly feminist, she argues, and the confirmation for this is found at the end of the novel where Tambudzai, the protagonist asserts herself with neither fear nor apology.

On the other hand, Moyana (2006) affirms that female writing is that which simply designates women's experience. In most cases, such experience is made visible in alienating, deluded or demeaning ways, experience epitomised by the Mills and Boon stories. These kind of experiences are also described by Flora Nwapa in her two novels, *Idu* (1970) and *Efuru*(1971 *),* which tend to reinforce the belief in the universal truism of man's supremacy and superiority over the woman and the rightful place of a woman being in the kitchen. Such works are obviously not emancipatory reading for women even though they are written by women. Moyana (2006) argues that to believe that common female experience in itself gives rise to a feminist analysis of women's condition, is to be at once politically immature and theoretically naive. Moyana claims that, the differences between the two traditions are clearly marked and the two traditions may not be mixed.

Moyana further adds that, by the same token, many feminists have considered the word 'feminine' as representative of *social constructs,* that is, 'patterns of sexuality and behaviour executed by cultural and social norms.' Hence, 'feminine' represents nurture and 'female' nature in this usage. She further explains that Dangarembga's novel falls within the feminist tradition. Moyana (2006) adds that the author does not simply describe women's experiences and leave them there; neither does she simply describe the socialisation of women into their roles. Rather, the feminist writer portrays some women who try to protest against their usual

socially accepted roles while others engage in a debate on how they are being used or misused by the men-folk. Chief among the women who protest against their feminine roles are Tambudzai, the imaginary narrator and protagonist of the novel *Nervous Conditions*, Nyasha, her cousin, and Lucia, her aunt. Moyana discusses the gender issues in the novel and tries to show why she says its woman's voice is significantly feminist:

> *It is my contention that Tambudzai, the fictive narrator of Nervous Conditions, and Nyasha protest and rebel against their gender or feminine roles, which their society normally accords female children. Lucia, on the other hand, simply acts and behaves in the way that pleases her, comments on issues that affect women and female children and knows how to use and manipulate the men in her life, namely Takesure, Jeremiah and Babamukuru, to get what she wants. In the end she escapes from poverty and illiteracy to become an emancipated woman in her own way. Right from the beginning of the story, Tambudzai categorises the women in her story: a story which is not 'about death, but about my escape and Lucia's; about my mother's and Maiguru's entrapment; and about Nyasha's rebellion — Nyasha, far-minded and isolated, my uncle's daughter, whose rebellion may not in the end have been successful* **(p. 1).**

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The other two novels ***Second Class Citizen*** (1979) by Buchi Emecheta and ***So Long A Letter*** (1981) by Mariama Bâ automatically fit into the description of the feminist tradition; their heroines and female characters are strong and they defy all odds and set themselves free. Their literary texts voice out the voices of the voiceless women in society. In their literary texts, they just do not present women's problems but they go on to give alternatives.

The following section reviews literature on African women writers because the texts used in this study were written by African women writers.

2.8   African women writers

The end of the twentieth century saw the emergence of more African female writers. Chitando (2011) laments the fact that women writers appeared on the scene after a long struggle. Musvoto (2006) narrates how ambitious black Zimbabwean women writings were shunned by men due to patriarchal beliefs. He explains that some members of the patriarchy and publishers formed a counterproductive alliance detrimental to women's writing. He quotes one Zimbabwean woman writer, Ketinah Muringani, who said: *My first manuscript was complete when my husband burnt it saying I wasn't giving him due attention*. Julia Luwanda, another woman writer interviewed by Veit-Wild said:

> *Being a Shona woman writer, Shona men tend to regard women's ideas, writings or literary attempts as not worthwhile for public digestion. This might be the reason I hesitated sending some of my early manuscripts.*

The two women's responses show the absence of a platform to express themselves. Apart from being silenced, the responses show that the act of writing 'places the black women outside acceptable cultural spaces where their voices should only be heard in the domestic arena.' Chitando (2011) further explains that in Zimbabwe, Dangarembga was the first woman to have a novel **Nervous Conditions** (1988) published in English. Moyana (2006) adds that Dangarembga had brought a new viewpoint regarding women's status in the Zimbabwean society.

The period witnessed the explosion of creative writing by women whose major concern was to highlight the plight of women. It also saw their various endeavours to create a new and non-oppressive permitting environment in which they could resolve their problems. Writing was considered by these writers as another space, a place of opportunities, and function as a place for reflexion, reminiscence, or fantasy, a preparatory entrance for future activity, a site of resistance, a place of performance. In telling the tale, writing the creative work, women proclaim their sense of self (Alcoff & Kittay, 2007).

 African women's writing is a multi-voiced address. Stratton (1994) expounds that when women began publishing their works, they encountered the difficulty not only of speaking for the experience of women in their own right but also of combating the beliefs of colonial and

anti-colonial writing. In fact, by simply writing, Ogot and Nwapa confronted a number of orthodoxies; the voicelessness of the black woman and the idea of writing as an exclusively male activity. Stratton further elaborates that the acute practice of not including women's literary expression from African literature is 'a socially symbolic act' that functions to marginalise women in society. Hortense Sillers, a female poet cited by Benstock (1987, p.181) acknowledges:

> *I realise that black women writers are an important and comforting presence in my life. Only they know my story. It is absolutely necessary that they be permitted to discover and interpret the entire range and spectrum of the experience of black women and not be stymied by preconceived conclusions. Because of these writers there are more models of how it is possible for us to live, there are more choices for black women to make, and there is a larger space in the universe for us.*

Hortense Sillers acknowledges the importance of African women writers in the literary canon. These writers have brought a new dimension to African literature .Their writings echo the voices of the many voiceless African women and their works challenge male dominance. Hortense Sillers argues that only women writers can tell women's stories. Among these are Toni Morrison (Afro-American), who in her works writes about the oppressive nature of class and the domination of black women by black men. She describes gender as constituting oppressive discourses. Significance of colour, class and gender is an issue that Morrison treats in some of her works. Another renowned author Doris Lessing presents views on African women who live in a white-ruled society and whose lives are shaped by economic and social dependence on men. In Lessing's works, male domination also structures the lives of settler women. Lessing's view of African women is, with the exception of hunger, unchanging; therefore, they are passive, suffering and submissive. She presents women as victims of sexual exploitation. On the other hand, Alice Walker's works give a voice to those women who have no voices.The female protagonist of such writers moves towards empowerment by entering public space from which native patriarchs and European colonisers have excluded her, and launch a new relationship to domestic space, characterised under patriarchy as a restraining enclosure. She posits a liberating different space within it (Alcoff & Kittay, 2007).One of the feminist writers, Calixthe Belaya justifies her literary commitment towards womanhood. Without mincing her words, she laments:

The African woman faces three types of battle. First, she has to struggle because she is a woman. Next, she has to assert herself as a black woman. Finally, she has to struggle for social integration. She is without doubt, the human being in the world with the greatest problems. At the same time, she carries a lot of burdens (**Amina, 1996, p.11**)

Kristina Rungano, a Zimbabwean poet, well-known known for her collection of poems "A storm is Brewing" (1985), in most of her poems affirms the above sentiments of women's suffering. African women writers have emerged in their numbers to the extent that I cannot mention them all here. Some of these women writers' works were used in this study and others were cited. Chandra Mohanty, a prominent feminist writer, observed that these women writers write on the basis of their shared experiences as women.

Chitando (2011) cites Nfah-Abbenyi (1997) who has made key observations regarding the determination of African women writers to challenge male dominance:

African women writers have not just openly lamented, questioned, and criticised the neglect of their work; they have also attacked this neglect through their ongoing exercise of the act of writing. They have slowly but surely used their writings as weapons to invade the battlefields that had hitherto been occupied and dominated by male writers, making tangible gains along the way. These women writers have beaten and are still beating their drums and are letting their war-cries be heard side by side with those of their counterparts at home and abroad (**Nfah-Abbenyi, 1997, p. 148).**

Chitando (2011) comments that in their pursuit to "let their war-cries be heard", African women writers have played a major role in their fight for dignity. Currently, a number of women scholars have taken up the challenge of analysing African women's literature. The tendency has been to perceive gender as referring to women only and not roles that women and men play in social contexts.

Gaidzanwa (2010), a strong Zimbabwean feminist writer drew attention to the negative images of women in Zimbabwean literature. An example of where such negative images of women are portrayed is in Stanley Nyamupfukudza's ***Non Believers' Journey***. In this novel by a male author, women are treated as men's sex objects. Chitando (2011) asserts that, the

main image of a woman, especially in the urban context, is that she is a prostitute or promiscuous. For Gaidzanwa (2011), "There is no distinction made between lovers, mistresses, concubines and prostitutes. "As long as a woman has sex with a man who is not her husband, she is held to be a prostitute, implicitly or explicitly" (p. 12). Gaidzanwa reveals the patriarchal bias in most works by male authors.

On the issue of writing, Nyanhongo (2011) argues that modern African female writers such as Flora Nwapa, Ama Ata Aidoo, Yvonne Vera, Tsitsi Dangarembga, Mariama Bâ and Buchi Emecheta, among many others, have sought to remedy the one-sided presentation of the African women in African literature as has been shown by Gaidzanwa above. Eagleton (2010) observes that while literature by women conveys essential insights into female experiences, the fact is, it has not been easy for them to publish their works. As Aidoo (2007) argues that life for the African woman writer is absolutely not easy, yet, in the face of these odds, African women writers struggle to reverse aspects of female marginalisation and seek to right the wrongs of the past. They investigate and explore ways in which women can overcome the hindrances hampering their personal empowerment. Basically, their message is that in the face of a tyrannical system of deep-rooted norms and practices that foster female subordination, women writers must strive to affirm themselves by portraying the extent to which their female protagonists can achieve self-realisation. These writers are committed to redefining the role of African women and rectifying the gender inequality in the literary sphere. Thus these female writers seek to inspire other women and the society at large to view the position of women and the potential available to them differently.

Nyanhongo (2011) further explains that the work of this nature has had an effect on African literature because it worked on attempts to reconstruct the distorted image of women in African literature. While forging their new approach, the feminist critics met their obvious resistance in the form of male colleagues supposedly scared by changes in the canon that had, in Annette Kolodny' s words "previously reified(their)sense of power and significance in the world." Nevertheless, according to Showalter (1993), the resistance of male criticism is easing now as they begin to acknowledge that "literary misogyny can no longer be overlooked." Some male writers such as Chinua Achebe in *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987), Sembene Ousmane in *God's Bits of Wood* (1984) and Ngugi Wa Thiongo in *The Detained* (1981) are reconsidering their earlier methods by presenting different and considerable images of women. Ngugi writes about heroines who take part in liberation struggles as

demonstrated in *Petals of Blood* (1977) and *Devil on the Cross* (1980). For his part, Ousmane depicts strong, resolute women who play a critical role in a railway strike. The image of the woman in many feminist novels has changed as well. The female characters are determined women who work hard and achieve self-independence and become economically independent (Chindedza, 2012).

It is against this background that this study investigates the attitudes of university lecturers and students towards the writings by African feminist writers. Literature has revealed that the strong negative impact of patriarchy is felt from the time the woman starts writing, where the husband has power to silence the voice of the woman. The same applies to publishers, who are mostly men, who are not willing to publish her works.

It is important to mention that some of these African women writers' literary works are being studied at the selected university. The following section reviews literature on representation of women writings and education.

2.9 Representation: women writings and education

Literature reviewed has shown that women writings have been under-represented and women's education has not been taken seriously despite the important contributions their writings and their education make to different societies. This is indicative of patriarchal societies. The current study investigated lecturers and students' views towards feminist literary texts in the undergraduate English curriculum at the selected university. The following are studies which were carried out on women writings and education.

In relation to the representation of women writings, Hart (2006) investigated whether women writings in the feminist mode were included in *The Journal of Higher Education* (JHE).She found that, in spite of an increased number of educated women, their articles are not included in *The Journal of Higher Education.* She notices with concern that more women than ever before are dynamic participants in higher education. She claims that more than 50% of all undergraduate students are women and the figures of women graduate, professional, and doctoral-degree recipients and faculty are increasing in America. Her concern is that

women's writings are marginalised in *The Journal of Higher Education* in spite of their high academic qualifications.

Hart (2006) cites Smallwood (2003) who claims that for the first time, American women have received more doctorates than American men have. Given this unstable post-secondary climate, more scholarships by women and about women, as well as an increase in feminist scholarship from previous generations should be part of the discourse but it is not. So, Hart (2006) was concerned with examining how women literature is handled given the above situation. She used gender and feminism as lenses to analyse the presence of works written in the feminist mode. She wanted to understand better how feminist scholarship and how women are treated in the scholarly works contained in the journals. Hart used the feminist theoretical framework to guide her analysis. Her study becomes relevant to the current study in the sense that, the feminist theory she used was used to guide this study. Her study investigated whether women continue to be marginalised in academia because of gender. The current study investigated gender attitudes towards feminist literary texts and from lecturers' and students' views, hoped to find out if the under-representation of feminist literary texts was attitudinal. However, Hart concentrated on the inclusion of more articles in the feminist mode in leading journals of higher education, and the current study advocates for more feminist literary texts in the university undergraduate English curriculum.

In another study carried out by Nkomo and Ngambi (2009), they found that higher education is a major site of social practice, identity creation and symbolic control. Shabalala (2009) cites Austin and Austin (2000, p.2) who say the challenge for higher education is to "empower students by helping them develop those special talents and attitudes that will enable them to become effective social change agencies." This means that universities must include curricula that cater for the needs of both women and men. In other words, curricula at university should be gender sensitive. The selected university undergraduate English curriculum has a proportion of one feminist literary text to three other texts. Given the trend of the above discussions, it follows that the under-representation of the feminist writings in the undergraduate English curricula is not a new phenomenon at all.

The liberal feminist theoretical framework this study adopted focuses on equal opportunities of women and men in everything that has to do with their lives. The liberal feminist theory wants to see women being integrated into the mainstream. They are worried about the

marginalisation of women in different discourses. They want the race to be fair. In other words, "first, to make sure the rules of the game are fair, and second, to make certain that none of the runners in the race for society's goods and services is systematically disadvantaged" (Tong, 2009, p. 2). The critical and feminist paradigms which guided this study advocate for equality in all spheres of life. This study advocates for a fair representation of both male and feminist writings in the university undergraduate English curriculum.

Despite the advocacy for equality by liberal feminists, Odhiambo (2011) laments that in Kenya women continue to be marginalised in many areas of society. Odhiambo further argues that another major constraint to women's enrolment and participation in higher education and directly related to gender stereotype has been the socio-cultural values, beliefs and practices that militate against the education of girls. These include lesser valuing of the education of daughters and the higher value placed on marriage and motherhood and their accompanying gender-specific roles. That is the reason why there seems to be marginalisation of women in leadership positions. But still, it indicates that the girl-child is not given the same opportunity to go further with her education as has been indicated in the discussion above.

In the same vein, Mutekwe and Modiba (2013) argue that in spite of international calls for equality and democracy, women remain side lined in education and career decision-making organisations in Zimbabwe. They further assert that, there is need to take in the views of girls and women in all spheres of life, because they are in the majority constituting more than half the population of the country (51%). So, discriminating against them is a sign of male chauvinism and authoritarianism. It is in this context that the current study advocates for more feminist voices in the selected university undergraduate English curriculum.

The next section reviews literature on African and Western feminism. Western Feminism is reviewed in this chapter because it was used as a lens to view this study. However, African feminism is reviewed in order to differentiate between the two.

2.9 African and Western feminism

This section reviews literature on African and Western feminism. African feminism is discussed because the literary texts that were used in this study were written by African women writers. However, Western feminism is used in this study because it is widely used in universities to analyse feminist works, so lecturers and students are conversant with it and therefore was adopted despite the fact that the literary texts under study were written by African women. However, there is need to review literature on African feminism to differentiate it from western feminism.

Feminism is a pro-women movement that developed in the west as part of the women's liberation movement. Seeking to define feminism has proved to be not only difficult but also debatable. In an analysis of Western feminism, Beasley (1999, p. xi) concluded that 'In addition to problems associated with a complex, shifting and sometimes inaccessible field, defining feminism also involves considering whether it is in any sense distinguishable from"other" forms of thought. The issue of feminism's "borders" is a matter of debate.' Therefore, African feminism is often defined by what it is not. Its origins are indebted to dynamics different from those that produced Western feminism. It has largely been shaped by African women's resistance to Western domination and its legacy within African culture as they take steps to define themselves, their interests and their concerns. Western feminist theory appears to present itself as a worldwide phenomenon in ways which disguise its overwhelmingly Western concerns and biases. Despite this criticism, it remains important in this study. The study focused on its strengths and not weaknesses, hence its usefulness.

African feminism is a conceptual framework established by African scholars raising a number of issues including the rejection by Western feminists of African women's power within native relational worlds that celebrate motherhood, sisterhood and friendship (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010). In her much cited work by Chilisa and Ntseane, Steady (1987) defined African feminism as emphasising female independence and co-operation; nature over culture and the centrality of children, multiple mothering and kinship. Although obliged to the global feminist movement, African feminist discourse takes care to define those concerns that are peculiar to the African situation.

The concept has been enunciated by African scholars who have argued that Western feminism does not represent African realities (Ngunjiri, 2010). For example, Acholonu (1995, p. 103) strongly argued that "it is impracticable, almost suicidal for African women to adopt Western feminist ideologies without regard for the basic and fundamental historical, cultural and ideological differences in the experiences, and the world-view." African feminism is opposed to how Western feminism dichotomises human relations placing males against females, as well as the individualism and competitiveness intrinsic in Western feminism (Ngunjiri, 2010; Nnaemeka, 2003; and Arndt, 2002). As Ngunjiri (2010, p. 757) argues that, African feminist scholars "recognise that African women's realities demand a more holistic perspective that does not pit men against women; instead such a perspective must root out the unjust social arrangements between men and women." African scholars such as Ekpa (2000, p. 28) have gone further and "rejected a feminism that claims anti-sexist, but turns out sexist in its statements, doctrines and publications about the other, that is man – in society." Ekpa (2000) argues that the anti-male-authored-text attitude conveyed by some Western 'gynocritics'is nothing but gendered discrimination that must be avoided because it is detrimental to the African female cause.

The need for African viewpoints, theories and concepts in academics to ensure better interpretation is therefore a necessity. Some African feminist researchers such as Chilisa and Ntseane (2010) have even gone further by suggesting the use of different methodologies rather than conservative Western-based and scientifically organised research methods and techniques. They have suggested that the use of context-specific and native methods such as the use of songs to communicate life experiences be used more and be recognised in researching gender issues in Africa. African women recognise the significance of Western feminism in unveiling the disempowered situation of women under the patriarchal system and acknowledge the influence of the feminist movement. However, they also observe its limitations in coping with the reality of African women. They have over the years suggested another movement which takes into consideration Africa's history of colonisation and imperialism, Africa's traditions and the necessity of not untying oneself from the African male in the construction of Africa.

As Boyce-Davies (1986) argued, a sincere African feminism should firstly recognise the necessity of a common struggle with African men in order to construct Africa. She states that the movement is not 'antagonistic to men but it challenges them to be aware of certain silent

aspects of women's subjugation' (Boyce-Davies, 1986, p. 9). It proposes a deconstruction of Western philosophy and a resistance to imperialism and/or neo-imperialism. Western feminism may be considered to have grown out of the appearance of the bourgeois nuclear family, where mechanisation allowed women more individual economic freedom and made smaller family sizes more socially desirable. Whereas African feminism grows out of a political climate that united men and women against colonialism and an economic climate of extreme poverty that generates competition among men and women for limited resources (Arndt, 2000). African feminism therefore encourages the working together of men and women in an attempt to address gender inequalities. One sphere that has increasingly held the attention of theorists like Steady has been the question of the involvement of men. The basis is that, if African feminism is to succeed as a humane reorganisation project, it cannot accept separatism from the opposite sex. Shunning male exclusion becomes one defining feature of African feminism that distinguishes it from feminism as it is conceptualised in the west. Chilisa and Ntseane (2010) put it rather well that African feminism, while anti-gender-separatism and pro-male, still seeks female agency and autonomy.

As suggested by African feminist theorists, this situation can best be improved in a comprehensive environment where men and women work together to address these differences. Feminist criticism as a theoretical framework takes different tactics. For example, Western white feminism flourishes on gender polarisation and fragmentation, while Africana womanism is embracing in approach. It emphasises power-sharing, complementarity, accommodation, compromise, negotiation and inclusiveness (Hudson-Weems, 2004). Africana womanism refuses and rebels against the prevailing trend in the traditional feminism which constructs barriers between masculinity and femininity. Nnaemeka suggests that African feminism is a philosophy that promotes harmony between women and men. She rejects any gender or sex separation as she writes;

> *Diverse perceptions of the nature of power account for the different locations and articulations of power in gender analysis. While a zero-sum matrix and a winner take-all reasoning govern the articulation of power in Western feminist discourse, African feminism sees power as negotiable and negotiated; it assesses power not in absolute but in relative terms – in terms of power-sharing and power ebb and flow. While Western feminist discourse emphasises the power grabbing that reinforces individualism, African feminist discourse foregrounds the power-sharing that*

underscores community and human living as they are inscribed in many African proverbs (**Nnaemeka, 2005, pp. 33-34).**

Steady (1987) cited by Chilisa and Ntseane (2010) articulates African feminism. Her views also point to the interdependence between women and men. For women, the male is not 'the other' but part of the human. Each gender constitutes the critical half that makes the human whole. Neither sex is totally complete in itself to constitute a unit by itself. Each has and needs to complement the other despite the possession of unique features of its own. Sexual differences and similarities as well as sex roles enhance sexual independence and cooperation between women and men, rather than promote polarisation and fragmentation. Egejuru and Katrak (1997) posit that, African feminism works towards a demystification of male stereotypes of an African woman as goddess, as Supreme Mother, self-sacrificing and suffering willingly and silently. 'A woman has no mouth' is a phrase found in many different African oral traditions, a serious statement in terms of African writers breaking that imposed silence.

Despite the strong arguments presented above on the importance of using African feminism theory, this study made use of insights from different forms of Western feminism in its analysis of gender attitudes towards feminist literary texts.

This study builds on these earlier researches but it goes a step further to investigate lecturers' and students' responses to feminist ideologies that contest dominant patriarchal values. Their views were analysed through the feminist lens in general and the liberal feminist theory in particular and the Transactional Reader Response Theory was used to record and analyse participants' views. What most of these studies have not done is to find out how gender (the state of being male or female) impact on those who engage directly with feminist literary texts which contest patriarchal ideologies in a patriarchal nation like Zimbabwe, particularly in the context of Zimbabwean universities. Most studies in this respect have analysed feminist literary texts using information from the library but this study gathered information from participants who were engaged with these feminist literary texts at university level.

The discussions done in this study hoped to conscientise lecturers and students that, feminist ideologies that are observable in these feminist literary texts can be used as a stepping stone

to re-address the imbalances that exist in the undergraduate English curriculum-not at their university only but also in other universities in Zimbabwe. These new ways of thinking derive from the gaps and shortcomings in the existing literature.

2.11 Conclusion

Literature review from Africa has shown that gender socialisation has a strong impact on the attitude that an individual has towards the opposite sex. Literature from Sub-Saharan Africa has confirmed that the socialisation of boys and girls has effects on an individual as he/she grows into adulthood. Boys are socialised into believing that women are weaker than men thereby developing a negative attitude towards whatever is done by a woman. Maphaha's (1996) study showed that boys have a negative attitude towards a female principal. This is also supported by Morojele (2009) who discovered that one of his male participants did not hide the fact that he was not comfortable with the idea of a female head at the school. These two studies were carried out in different eras but their findings are the same. This proves that patriarchy in Africa is still alive. The literature has also confirmed that the idea of gender is a social construct and it is society which gives these constructs. The idea that women are weaker than men was proved by Morojele's study that it is society that teaches men that women are weak. Morojele found out that girls beat boys at the school where he was carrying out his study. The girls only fought the boys in the absence of teachers for fear of being labeled deviant but the truth is that, girls are not weaker than boys but it is society that restricts girls from demonstrating their full potential.

In contrast, literature from the Western countries has shown that gender has nothing to do with the attitudes that males and females have towards women. In fact, they found out that generational gap has much to do with attitudes towards women .Their studies found out that the young adult's attitude towards the reading of literary texts had nothing to do with the influence from adults. Their answers were independent from adults' influence.

Literature from Africa and the Western world has revealed that women are marginalised in different discourses. This also includes the literature world, where women's issues and works published by women are not readily accepted in a world dominated by men. On this issue,

patriarchy is dominant all over the world as has been noted by many researchers in the discussion above.

Literature has also revealed that women writers suffer a double tragedy in their careers in a world dominated by men. They suffer oppression from patriarchy as well as the influence of colonialism left by their colonial masters. Their feminist ideologies make men resent their works, claiming that these feminist ideologies are dangerous to society.

Literature has been reviewed within different contexts in this chapter. Much has been said about how gender socialisation can affect an individual's attitude towards the opposite sex especially in the African contexts. However, literature from the Western countries has shown that attitude towards the opposite gender has nothing to do with gender socialisation but the generation in which the individual grew up.

The next chapter looks at the theoretical framework.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework that was adopted in this study.

In this study, I focused on the biological sex of being female and male only. As a result, I did not consider any other sexual orientation although I acknowledge that they exist. In the Zimbabwean culture, identifying with a gender different from the acceptable biological sex is socially and ethically unacceptable. The Zimbabwean State president, Robert Gabriel Mugabe has clearly criticised expressions of transgender (Lavers, 2013) and this is one of the reasons why it is a suppressed phenomenon. Therefore, the phenomenon of transgender is silent in Zimbabwe and will not be considered for this study.

The previous chapter addressed various issues regarding women's status in male-dominated societies and establishes a premise for feminist research into the phenomenon under study. The feminist nature of this study calls for a theoretical framework that gives participants the freedom to express themselves. Therefore, this study adopted the feminist theory in general and the liberal feminist theory in particular and the reader response theory in general and the transactional reader response theory in particular to view this study.

Before I delve into the theoretical framework that underpins this study, it is imperative that I acknowledge that feminism is diverse and this brings in the complexity of the topic when one is using a feminist theoretical framework in research. My intention in this chapter is neither to provide an extensive discussion on the diversity of feminism nor to give a detailed list of the different feminisms because many scholars have exhaustively done that.

Over the last three decades, feminist theories and methodologies have become increasingly complex and debates on feminism are still being held; this shows how controversial and complex feminism is. Therefore, it would be difficult for me to discuss the different feminisms that emerged or that are emerging. As a result, my task in this chapter is to give a general overview of feminism and to provide a detailed discussion of the liberal feminist

theoretical framework and the transactional reader response theory that underpin this study. An overview of feminism is given because the liberal feminist theory which was used as a lens to view this study is a derivative of Western feminism. I will give the reader response theory orientation as it was used to record and analyse participants' views on the feminist literary texts they were engaged with. The critical and feminist paradigms which were adopted in this study were influenced by the liberal feminist theoretical framework. These paradigms will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

The following section gives a general outlook of feminism because the liberal feminist theoretical framework that was used as a lens to view this study has its roots in feminism. It is important to give a general outlook of feminism for readers to understand better the liberal feminist theoretical framework used in this study.

3.2 Feminism at a glance

Feminism is a philosophy that opposes the political, economic and cultural relegation of women to positions of inferiority. Feminism asserts that men, either intentionally or unintentionally have oppressed women, allowing them little or no voice in the political, social and economic matters of their society. By not giving voice and value to women's opinions, responses and writings, men have suppressed the female, defined what it means to be womanly, and thereby devoiced, reduced and belittled what it means to be a woman. In effect, men have made women the "nonsignificant Other" (Bressler, 2011). Feminism's goal therefore is to change this humiliating view of women so that all women can assert their dignity and maintain a healthy self-esteem.

Hannam (2007) presents three central characteristics of feminism: acknowledgement of an imbalance of power between the sexes with women in a subservient role to men; a belief that women's condition is socially constructed and therefore can be changed and an emphasis on female autonomy. The above definitions of feminism are all concerned with women's issues. Villaverde (2008) contends that the feminist theory and feminism pursue the same agenda. Therefore, this helps to show that feminists are feminism activists who put theory into practice.

Feminists have drawn from a variety of sources in their quest for equal power. Much research has been done into the exercise and effects of power and its implications for the unequal power relations between the sexes. While it advocates women's emancipation, it has no political centre from which to develop a definitive and authoritative identification of the goals and strategies for women's emancipation. The beginning of emancipation is also challenging in terms of how it is regarded, by whom and for what purpose (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002).Thus it is established that this is a contested terrain centred on a central thesis, the emancipation of women from the shackles of patriarchy.

The next section gives an overview of the feminist theory in general.

3.3.1 An overview of feminist theory

The feminist theory is a development of the critical theory which emerged from the Frankfurt school. It is about equal access of people to good things in life; it studies the social situations of women in a patriarchal, sexist world. It aims to uncover sexism and gender blindness in all spheres of life. Its goal is to understand women's lives in order to redress the subordinated position of women in society and contribute to changing forms of prevailing gender regimes (Villaverde, 2008). It seeks to authorise women and give them a voice to speak out about their experiences of gender oppression (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Therefore, feminist theories are critical to this research as they facilitate an awareness of the status and contribution of women to society, and more critically, recognise the need to engage men in the (re)construction of society.

Feminists believe that women are oppressed simply due to their sex which is under sufferance from the dominant ideology of patriarchy. Freeing society of patriarchy will result in the liberation for women, men, minorities and gays. They contend that patriarchy is the structure which oppresses women through its social, economic and political institutions. Throughout history, men have had greater power in both the public and private spheres. To maintain this power, men have created restrictions and obstacles for women, thus making it harder for women to hold power. Patriarchy also includes the oppression of minorities and homosexuals (Villaverde, 2008).

However, as a theory, the feminist perspective has its own weaknesses. Its major weakness is that, despite the fact that it seeks to give a voice to women, it fails to adequately take into account the heterogeneity of women of African descent. Nonetheless, its weaknesses are outweighed by its strength; as a result, it remains critical to this study.

3.3.2 Feminist goals

Feminist theory attempts to develop a comprehensive account of the subordination of women and the origin of this subordination. It is a prerequisite for developing effective strategies to liberate women and it identifies the underlying causes of women's subordination. Tong (2006), a renowned feminist posits that feminist theory attempts to describe women's oppression, to explain its causes and consequences and to prescribe strategies for women's liberation. Flax (1990), another renowned feminist propounds that feminist theory has three important purposes: the first one is to understand the power differential between men and women, the second is to understand women's oppression, how it evolves, how it changes over time, and how it is related to other forms of oppression and the third is to look at how to overcome this oppression.

Jean Grimshaw a feminist in her essay, *Philosophy and Feminist Thinking (1988)* argues that, for any viewpoint to count as feminist, it must accept that women have been oppressed and unjustly treated and that it requires urgent redress. These feminist theories have variously addressed patriarchy and the question of women's subordination. They are concerned with how and why subordination is perpetuated and how it might change. Feminist theories provide guides to understanding gender inequality and guides to action. Their political motivation is to transform patriarchy.

However, feminist theory in general has been criticised for its portrayal of women as 'passive' victims as if they are unable to act against discrimination. It focuses too much on negative aspects, sometimes ignoring recent social changes. For example, the penetration of women into male domains that was a preserve for males in engineering, medicine, accounting, mechanics and many more. Although women are now accepted into these domains, still they are accepted with reservations. Liberal feminists argue that, the reason why women are accepted with reservations is due to society believing that women are not

competent enough to do these jobs. However, the feminist literary texts used in this study show that women are capable and often can even do better than men.

Below is a discussion of the liberal feminist theoretical framework that was used to guide this study.

3.3.3 The liberal feminist theory

Mary Wollstonecraft and Naomi Wolf, among others are the advocates of liberal feminism; their feminist ideas were incorporated in this study. Mary Wollstonecraft argues that women's weaknesses were not normal but simply the product of miseducation. Her writings have never really gone out of fashion and a great many modern women have reacted eagerly and thankfully to her work. On the other hand, Mary Astell was one of the first true feminists, perhaps the first English writer to explore and proclaim ideas about women which are still being responded to today (details of these writers are provided in chapter one).

The liberal feminist theory was chosen as the main lens to guide this study because of its transformative nature that advocates for change through negotiation as well as its advocacy for emancipation. It was through engaging university lecturers and students that the study investigated lecturers and students' views on the literary texts they were engaged with, that would see the addition of more feminist literary texts in the undergraduate English curriculum. Guided by the transactional reader response theory and aided by the liberal feminist theory, lecturers' views were accepted as they were. The liberal feminist theory, together with the feminist and critical paradigms that were adopted in this study, gave participants the leverage to express their views on the feminist literary texts they were engaged with.

Feminist liberalism generally is a transformative liberalism. It seeks not only to establish that state influence may be used to some feminists ends but also to transform forms of lives (Abbey, 2011). The liberal feminists argue that a fair society is one in which all individuals have the right to exercise their independence and to fulfill themselves irrespective of their sex or gender (Beasley, 1999). She further explains that, liberal feminists argue that society eliminates women on the basis of the false belief that women are by nature less capable than men and do not share the same rational nature as men. History has shown that women's

literary works were not published because women were looked down upon by men. Gender equality, according to liberal feminists, requires first, making the rules of the game fair for both men and women and secondly, making certain that none of the runners in the race for society's goods and facilities are systematically deprived (Beasley, 1999). Baehr (2013) cites Okin (1989) who adds that, liberal feminists hold that women's needs and interests are insufficiently reflected in the basic conditions under which they live and that those conditions lack legitimacy because women are inadequately represented in the processes of democratic autonomy. They hold that autonomy deficits like these are due to the "gender system" or the patriarchal nature of inherited traditions and institutions, and the government can and should be the women's ally in supporting women's autonomy and should take action to correct that.

Liberal feminism works within the organisation of mainstream society to assimilate women into that structure. They are not challenging capitalism or patriarchy or any other important structures of society, but rather looking for the removal of obstacles that prevent women from operating efficiently in the public sphere on equal terms with men. To this end, they will work with both men and women, quite often in formal pressure group type of organisations and quite often aiming their strategies at changes in law. However, this might not be possible because the procedural justice itself is patriarchal in nature and as a result, can never provide for equal opportunities for women. The radical and socialist feminists concur that only by the eradication of such social institutions and the establishing of new structures can women escape the oppressive nature of a patriarchal society (Baehr, 2013).

Liberal feminism locates the origins of women's oppression in women's lack of equal civil rights and equal opportunities as well as in past customs and learned psychology associated with the sex role socialisation process. Based upon this examination, liberal feminism purports that women's liberation will be achieved with the removal of sexist discrimination so that women have the opportunity to pursue their potential for individual development just as fully as men do. This feminist perspective emphasises social and lawful reform through procedures designed to create equal opportunities for women and to establish individual civil rights so that no one is denied access to the existing social-economic system because of sex, race, or class. In support of liberal feminism, Julia Kristeva, cited by Abbey (2011) states that women request equal access to the symbolic order, therefore, women discard the male symbolic order in the name of difference. Liberal feminism further assumes that the re-

education of the public concerning the sex role socialisation process is a means towards achieving more liberated and equal opportunities in gender relations (Abbey, 2011).

The main view of liberal feminists is that all people are created by God and deserve equal rights. These types of feminists believe that domination exists because of the way in which men and women are socialised, which supports patriarchy and keeps men in superior positions. Liberal feminists believe that women have the same intellectual capacity as their male counterparts and should be given the same chances in political, economic and social spheres. Women should have the right to choose, not have their life chosen for them because of their sex. Basically, women must be like men (Snodgrass, 2014).

Liberal feminists create and support acts of legislation that remove the obstacles for women. These acts of legislation demand equal opportunities and rights for women, including equal pay. They believe that removing these barriers openly challenges the philosophies of patriarchy as well as liberates women. As a result, they focus on equality for women in all areas by working for change within the existing system.

The liberal feminist theory is the most mainstream feminist perspective as well as the least controversial. The issues which differentiate liberal, Marxist and radical feminists were the reasons why the liberal feminist theory was used as a lens to view this study.

3.3.4 Criticism of the liberal feminist theory

There is considerable common criticism of feminist theoretical perspectives. Liberal feminism is blamed for elitism; whilst liberal strategies may enable a few tokens for women to 'have careers' and join the positions of the powerful, the structures of oppression survive unscathed. Liberal feminists are also criticised for converting the concept of equality of outcome to equality of opportunity (Otkin, 2009). They tend to believe sex differences (biological) are really gender differences (cultural).They have been known to focus on the legislation aspect in the fight against patriarchy and condemned for not breaking down the deeper ideologies of society and patriarchy. Also, they have been criticised for overlooking race and class issues.

However, their weaknesses are outweighed by their strengths and these weaknesses do not affect the results of this study in any way.

The next section looks at the reader response theory. The reader response theory was used to record and analyse participants' views.

3.4 Foregrounding the reader response theory

A text is written to be read and therefore the reader has a vital role in completing a text and giving it a new identity through the reading process he/she experiences. The reader has an active interaction with the written words which ultimately create the meaning. What is more, readers can be categorised depending on who defines them and the role they accept in the reading process which differs from one reader to another. At the same time, factors defining a reader vary regarding their exclusive role in completing a literary text. Abbey (2011) argues that there are even some experts who wish to distinguish a literary critic from a reader even though they are both readers, yet of different categories. Furthermore, each individual reader differs from any other reader regarding his background, knowledge, personality, insight, just to mention a few.

A reader plays a certainly exclusive part in giving a new meaning to a literary text and even from a totally new perspective. It has become clear that readers differ with each other in category and class. Unless a writer is writing in privacy; intending to keep a daily journal or just making rough drafts, he intends to attract readers to his piece of work. This will gradually find an independent life of its own as it is read by diverse readers and besides each with a particular history, knowledge, manner, personality, mood, psyche, and even age as active players who will give a new turn and direction to the created text(Tyson, 2006). Such mentioned factors are somehow defined by time and easily change through time; so when a reader studies a literary work when he/she is very young, his/her perception and overall understanding of the same text definitely changes deeply if he/she reads it once again many years later. The reason for this is that years later, he/she has earned a new insight, bears a high experience, whether as an individual or as an expert reader now, and his/her background knowledge and even his/her present desires will affect his/her latest reading of the same work; a point of interest even for the reader once he/she discovers so many new and exciting

codes within the unwritten lines of the story he/she is reading. Leitch (2001) argues that this process seems to be quite complicated and intangible. As every individual experiences this process in a unique manner and in a very exclusive and certain atmosphere, considering his/her age, past experience, knowledge, style of reading, rate of his/her preciseness, his/her power for simultaneous analysis and interpretation, how he/she essentially communicates with the text, his/her ability or disability to read between the lines, his/her reading atmosphere, how he/she seeks his/her personal pleasure and satisfaction in the book he/she has and numerous other factors including psychological aspects. Jauss (2001) posits that, such a vague insight on the reader, the reading process and what actually happens as he/she reads, gives the next generation of theorists and critics a good opportunity to discuss their own views openly on one hand, while it makes it hard for us to realise how to analyse and study. However, this not   well-known process on the other hand, constantly has serious questions about the readers and the reading process.

For evaluating a literary text, a text could be either acclaimed or disliked in a specific time period; Jauss apparently expresses that there is no fixed meaning for a text and there are a high variety of opinions available throughout time regarding a certain text (Jauss, 2001).
 Jauss further explains that, there is no such thing as a fixed meaning for a text; as readers attribute different opinions through time and actually the reader shows how his/her ideas bear a historical dimension; an issue which has led to a lot of debates and controversies among authors.

Therefore, it can precisely be said that each reader differs from all other readers in many ways and no one can ever claim that even two readers with similar literary background, life experiences, knowledge and psyche, for instance will experience identical reading processes. There will constantly be subtle, undeniable and complex differences in each individual reader. Although this is a fact, so far no literary figure, author, reader, writer, critic or even theorist has focused on it in order to distinguish readers at least into some categories with some detailed sets of definitions for paying respect to them.

Whatever the case, the reader too, as a human being seeks his/her own likes, desires, dreams and satisfactions at least in the text he is reading, and actually he/she might resort to a literary text as his/her sole resource for personal satisfaction, a tool which no one can take away from him/her while he secretly fulfils his/her personal needs in private and mere silence (Tyson,

2006). Readers who have discovered this exclusive feature in literature and have gained this secret discovery always take shelter in books for avoiding many life facts which might be irritating and exhausting for them. So each individual reader has the power to read, decode, attribute meaning, interpret, internalise his/her own experiences and past knowledge, for instance, on the text he/she is dealing with and while his/her personal discoveries and explorations in any given text could be possibly amazing and interesting. Another reader might find them quite odd and unusual and even accuse that reader of some psychiatric or mental problems.

Therefore, the choice of the reader response theory in recording and analysing participants' views was done conscientiously. The feminist ideologies that are observable in the feminist literary texts under study needed independent views from both lecturers and students. The participants could construct their own meanings from the feminist literary texts they were engaged with.

Below is a discussion of the development of the reader response theory.

3.4.1 Historical development of the Reader Response Theory

At present, the Reader Response Theory remains an important teaching approach with Rosenblatt's influence evident in contemporary research. English professors today can work the magic of the literary experience through the use of the Reader Response Theory in the teaching of literature (Tyson, 2006).

The Reader Response theories do not accept the New Criticism of the late 1930s through the 1950s which believed that the texts themselves were the core and that teachers were to teach the skills of close, concise, attentive analysis while discouraging expression of and attention to differences in students' own individual interpretations. Thus, in the 1960s and early 70s there occurred a paradigm shift in the teaching of literature away from looking at the text as authority to a view that focuses on the reader's relationship with text.

Rosenblatt (1995) notes that during any one reading experience, readers may shift back and forth along a continuum between efferent and aesthetic modes of reading processing. Thus, in adopting an aesthetic stance, a reader may briefly focus on analysing the techniques interacting in a text. Or, in an efferent stance, a reader may be stimulated to remember a related personal experience.

She also argues that "…there is no such thing as a generic reader or a generic literary work; there are in reality only the potential millions of individual readers of the potential millions of individual literary works" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 32).She focuses on the concept that shared criteria of validity of interpretation in a particular social context allows for different interpretations of the same text to be acceptable while some readings may satisfy the criteria more fully than others.

Rosenblatt's focus on the uniqueness of a particular, momentary transaction has become known as the "transactional theory" (1995) which proposes that the meaning of a text derives from a transaction between the text and reader within a specific context thus;

> Emphasizing the essentiality of both reader and text, in contrast to other theories that make one or the other determinate... 'Transaction'...permits emphasis on the to-and-fro, spiraling, nonlinear, continuously reciprocal influence or reader and text in the making of meaning. The meaning — the poem — 'happens' during the transaction between the reader and the signs on the page (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. xvi).

The transaction allows each individual reader to construct his or her own unique, subjective meanings. This theory calls into question the New Criticism assumption that the meaning resides solely in the text, accessible only to the trained eye of the critic/teacher. Rather than emphasise formalist analysis of a text, the primary goal of instruction from a transactional perspective is to foster students' trust in the expression of their individual experience with a text.

The next section discusses different approaches to reader response theory.

3.4.2 Approaches to reader response theory

There are multiple approaches within the theoretical branch of reader-response criticism yet all are unified in their belief that the meaning of a text is derived from the reader through the reading process. Tyson (2006) endeavours to define the variations into five recognised reader-response criticism approaches whilst warning that categorising reader-response theorists explicitly invites difficultly due to their overlapping beliefs and practices. Transactional reader-response theory, led by Louise Rosenblatt and supported by Wolfgang Iser, involves a transaction between the text's inferred meaning and the individual interpretation by the reader influenced by their personal emotions and knowledge. Affective stylistics, established by Stanley Fish, believe that a text can only come into existence as it is read; therefore, a text cannot have meaning independent of the reader. Subjective reader-response theory, associated with David Bleich, looks to the reader's response for literary meaning as individual written responses to a text and then compared to other individual interpretations to find continuity of meaning. Psychological reader-response theory, employed by Norman Holland believes that a reader's motives heavily affect how they read, and subsequently use this reading to analyse the psychological response of the reader. Social reader-response theory is Stanley Fish's extension of his earlier work, stating that any individual interpretation of a text is created in an interpretive community of minds consisting of participants who share a specific reading and interpretation strategy. In all interpretive communities, readers are predisposed to a particular form of interpretation as a consequence of strategies used at the time of reading.

The reader response theory approach adopted in this study is mostly inclined to Jauss' ideas who propounds that it would be equally wrong to say that a work is universal, that its meaning is fixed forever and open to all readers in any period. Jauss (2001) asserts that a literary work is not an object which stands by itself and which offers the same face to each reader in each period. It is not a monument which reveals its timeless essence in a monologue. In other words, Jauss believes that there is no fixed meaning in a literary work. The meaning always develops and changes with time. The readers in a given time have different interpretations with the readers in other periods. Therefore there will be no final meaning from a literary work. The theory focuses on the transaction between the text's inferred meaning and the individual interpretation by the reader influenced by their personal emotions and knowledge. The feminist literary texts under study involved the emotions and

knowledge of the lecturers and students hence the importance of the approach to this study. However, I acknowledge the contributions of other approaches by Iser, Fish, and Rosenblatt because they are important to this study.

After discussing the reader response theory, I give an overview of the theory.

3.4.3 Reader Response Theory: an overview

The focus of the reader response theory is generally more on extracting meaning from the text rather than making explicit the processes by which readers, or the critic, make meaning. The responses of actual readers are cited as evidence for claims about the reader/text transaction (Eagleton, 1983). These theories therefore assume that the text cannot be understood or analysed as an isolated entity. However, writers who have been called "reader-response critics" embrace an extremely wide range of attitudes toward, and assumptions about the roles of the reader, the text, and the social/cultural context shaping the transaction between reader and text (Mailloux, 2008). One particularly contentious issue has centred on the relative influence of the reader, the text and the reading situation on how the reading transaction is shaped. Mailloux (2008) has charged on the one hand that some reader-response critics who privilege the influence of the text on reader' responses are no more than New Critics in disguise, assuming that at the bottom, the text determines everything else. On the other hand, some critics have come very close to insisting that the text is no more than an inkblot, whose meaning is created entirely by the reader.

More recently, still others have argued that, to focus exclusively on the reader/text transaction is to ignore the crucial influence of social, cultural, or situational contexts on the nature of this transaction. It is also necessary to bear in mind that many theorists who might not identify themselves as reader-response critics have, in recent years expressed increasing interest in the meaning and conduct of the reader/text transaction (Eagleton, 1983).

Mailloux (2008) expounds that the critical theory seems to be remote from actual books, actual readers and individual reading events. Reader response criticism in contrast engages directly with the knotty problems of how readers understand texts and how we can elicit and interpret individual responses. In particular, reader response critics have argued that it is readers who make meaning by the activities they perform on texts. They see the reader at the

centre and thus the privileged position of the work of art is undermined and individual 'readings' become the focus of attention. It is the structure of the reader's experience rather than any structures available on the page that should be the object of description.

Reader-response criticism is really a collective term used to describe a number of critical theories that have emerged since the 1960s, all of which focus on the response of the reader to the text rather than the text itself as the source of meaning in a literary work. In reader-response criticism, a text is viewed as a process that goes on in the mind of the reader rather than as a stable entity with a single 'correct meaning.' In this sense, the reader actually participates in creating the text. In this study, most of the views participants gave on the feminist literary texts, were from their lived experiences, hence the relevance of this theory to the study.

Regardless of their particular perspectives, all reader-response critics agree that since in varying degrees, the individual reader creates the meanings of a text, there is no one correct meaning for a text. However, these critics offer differing opinions regarding how readers do in fact 'read.' Prominent critiques of the reader response theory are Wolfgang Iser, Jonathan Culler, Norman Holland, Harold Bloom, and Stanley Fish. They have contributed to different approaches to reader response theory.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter provided an outline of the theoretical orientation of the study. The theoretical framework was discussed in a manner that will enable readers to understand why this study takes the liberal feminist and the transactional reader response theoretical frameworks as lenses to view this study. The chapter discussed fully the historical backgrounds of the feminist and the reader response theories showing the early activists of these theories.

The next chapter looks at methodology.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter discussed the theoretical perspectives that underpin this study, that is, the liberal feminist and the reader response theories. Therefore, these influenced the choice of the feminist and critical paradigms that were adopted in this study.

In this chapter, I give an account of how the ontology, epistemology, study design, paradigm, research methods and data analysis produced credibility in this study. It involved females and males. I am a woman and I was researching a sensitive issue which involves the emotions of both the participants and the researcher. Therefore, I start by positioning myself in the research in order to uncover my influence in the construction of the research knowledge.

4.2 Positioning myself in the research

Feminist theories argue that the politics of the researcher are a central issue in the production of knowledge. Therefore, it is important for the researcher to acknowledge her/his beliefs, knowledge, position and drive in order to reveal his/her influence in the building and production of research knowledge (Stanto & Lee, 2003). In this research, I brought in my position as a woman who has beliefs, values, strengths and weaknesses.

I grew up in a family of five girls and one boy. The family was headed by my maternal grandmother. My grandfather had passed on when I was five years old. My uncle had to take over the headship from his late father. To say that my grandmother headed the family is just making an overstatement, the truth is, she was just a 'group leader' because my uncle gave her rules on the dos and don'ts on the farm she and her husband had laboured for. As I write now, I am embittered because my grandmother was left with literally nothing. My uncle and his young brothers had to enjoy the fruits of my grandmother's labour. Why? This was because my grandmother was a woman, who was seen as not entitled to any of her husband's

inheritance. This is the unfair treatment of women by society which feminists are aiming to address. This gave me the impetus to engage in this feminist study.

I recall one day when my uncle came to my grandmother's homestead angry, because my grandmother had given us a portion to grow groundnuts. She was told that she did not own any land on the farm. The land was his because as the first born son, he was entitled to his father's inheritance and my grandmother as a woman had to ask for permission from him. I still remember his words vividly because by then, I was thirteen years old and I understood what was going on.

My grandmother used to tell us how poor our grandfather was when she married him. She said they had nothing, to say the least. She narrated how hard she had to work in the fields in the absence of her husband. She had to struggle with child-bearing and at the same time, fending for the family. She said her husband, my grandfather, worked at a distant farm and would come home occasionally. Through their hard work, they were rewarded with riches. They bought two farms, owned four stores, four butcheries and four buses. From all these, my grandmother got nothing because traditionally, women were not allowed to inherit anything. The inheritance was divided amongst her sons. My grandmother's daughters inherited nothing because girls were not entitled to inherit anything from the father. From an early age, I became aware of gender imbalances that existed within families and I was also subjected to those imbalances.

My uncle had hard and fast rules at the farm. As girls we were not allowed to go for ball games to neighbouring schools. I was a good netballer and so I was in the school first team but honestly, I was not given enough chance to showcase my talent. My brother (is deceased now, may his soul rest in peace) was fortunate as a boy because he was allowed to go anywhere he wanted. We were made to cook good food for him. My grandmother would say "*mubikirei nekuti ndiye achazokuchengetai*" (meaning that we were supposed to cook for him because he was going to take care of us because we were girls).He was given the name Shepherd because he was the only boy in our family, for he was going to be our shepherd. Unfortunately, my brother was a complete failure in life although my uncle took pride in him. We had to take care of him and his family because he was never employed as he had no professional qualifications.

I remember one incident when the school head asked for permission from my uncle for me to go on an educational trip. I was more academically gifted than my brother and the school head did not want me to miss this educational tour. The head was disappointed because my uncle opted to pay for my brother who was not academically gifted at all. The reason was that, as a boy, he had to enjoy all the privileges. I really did not mind him because he treated his girl-children likewise. My uncle was an epitome of patriarchy but I blame my grandmother who socialised him that way, exactly the same way she was doing to my brother. My brother was a bully in the home because he enjoyed the privileges of being male. As girls, we were deprived of certain privileges because of our sex. Maybe I should not blame my grandmother because patriarchy was also engrained in her. She was also trapped because to me, she accepted her condition as a woman. She was also responsible for passing this to her great grandchildren.

As I grew into adulthood, I had a passion for reading books written by women because in these books, I was able to identify with certain female characters. This also gave me the interest to study English literature at high school and university. My childhood experiences gave me an urge to engage in the study that I am carrying out today. I was a victim of patriarchy. To me, patriarchy has negatively influenced my perceptions of life in as far as men and women issues are concerned.

I am conscious of the unfair treatment between men and women in different communities and especially in the community in which I grew up. This means that knowledge should stress the need to locate gender inequalities in social and power relations (Smith, 1990). Marxist feminists locate power to those who own the means of production. In this case, Marxist feminists believe that men wield power and therefore have the privilege to oppress women.

Epistemologically, my research is premised on exploring the different perceptions that are inherent in lecturers and students, the views they hold about the relationships between men and women in the feminist literary texts they engaged with, and how such relationships can impact on men and women in real life situations. Their views could be best interpreted from the transactional reader response perspective, since it allows for readers' understanding of the issues explored in the feminist literary texts. The feminist and critical paradigms employed in this research explore the inequality that is inherent in patriarchy and how women are unfairly treated in society because of their gender. The feminist theoretical framework that guided this

study seeks to address such unfair treatment. The critical and feminist paradigms do not seek to interpret the conditions of women in society only but also seek to change the status quo.

The study employed conventional methodologies (MacMillan &Schumaker, 2001) namely: observation, focus groups, interviews and document analysis. As a feminist researcher, I had to employ unconventional methods like informal conversations to understand gender interpretation of feminist ideologies.

My ontological and epistemological orientations have informed the design, research methods and processes and data analysis in this study. The following section discusses the paradigm that informs this study.

4.3 The paradigm

This study is a critical study which is rooted specifically in the feminist paradigm. This paradigm was chosen because of its potential to address critical issues that concern gender inequality in different societies. Central to the paradigm is transformation and emancipation. Weaver and Olson's (2006, p. 460) definition of a paradigm reveals how research could be affected and guided by a certain paradigm by stating that, "paradigms are patterns of beliefs and practices that regulate inquiry within a discipline by providing lenses, frames and processes through which investigation is accomplished." Furthermore, Jonker and Pennink (2010) define a research paradigm as a set of fundamental assumptions and beliefs as to how the world is perceived, which then serves as a thinking framework that guides the behaviour of the researcher. In addition, Babbie and Mouton (2001) posit that, a paradigm is a model or framework for observation and understanding which shapes both what we see and how we understand it.

It is also important to mention that the feminist paradigm falls under the critical theory paradigm because of its emancipatory and transformative aspects which are also crucial to the critical theory paradigm. They share the same metaphysical elements that constitute a paradigm. The feminist and critical paradigms advocate for change of the status quo, they do not just interpret the situation but they also advocate for transformation.

The feminist and critical paradigms in this study served as lenses to understand the ontological, epistemological and methodological dimensions of my research. Below is a discussion of the feminist paradigm.

4.3.1 The feminist paradigm

The feminist paradigm has beliefs similar to critical theory paradigm. The reason might be because the feminist paradigm is a derivative of the critical theory, hence the similarity in beliefs. The aim of the feminist paradigm is to elucidate bias and inequity in the way women are treated in various social settings and institutions and to fill in the gaps in our knowledge about women.

The critical theory paradigm has its belief in or advocacy of women's social, political, and economic rights, especially with regard to equality of sexes. It also believes that the research must be a process of conscientisation, not research solely by experts for experts, but to empower the oppressed (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).To further expand on Cohen et al.'s argument, Brooks (2007) contends that feminist approaches to research and to knowledge building aim to give voice to women's lived experiences, to expose hidden knowledge in women's experiences with the intent of generating women-centred solidarity and social transformation. It seeks to empower the persons being researched rather than reduce them to passive objects. It also seeks to promote political change for women and it openly acknowledges research bias.

Ontologically, the feminist paradigm believes that there is 'reality' that has been created and shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender-based forces that has been reified or crystallised over time into social structures that are taken to be natural or real. Epistemologically, the feminist paradigm assumes that we can separate ourselves from what we know and this inevitably influences inquiry. What can be known is inextricably tied to the interaction between a particular investigator and a particular object or group. The fact that the researcher of this study grew up in oppressive situations, made it worthwhile to hold interviews with lecturers and students. The interpretations participants came up with were real experiences of the researcher. In that case, the researcher and the participants had the same knowledge and so they were interconnected. The feminists believe that there should be

interconnectedness between the researcher and the participants (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

Methodologically, feminists use a wide range of research methods including naturalistic approaches to social inquiry, observation, interviewing with approaches that foster conversation, reflection and change with regard to 'natural' and oppressive order. In this study, I used a variety of methods to elicit data from lecturers and students. The methods employed in the study are discussed in the next sections. These methods were influenced by the reader response theory in that views were sought from participants' own interpretations of the feminist literary texts. Therefore, it was necessary to develop semi-structured interviews where participants could discuss issues without being restricted on which direction to take. The focus groups created a platform for participants to hear from each other gender issues that have become topical in this era. In this case, the social reader response theory by Iser was employed because it advocates for community interpretations. The informal conversations gave participants the freedom to express themselves.

Like any other theory, the feminist paradigm's weaknesses cannot be ignored. Its too much focus on women issues tends to be subjective rather than objective, in its stated aim of building "on and from women's experience" (Sarantoks, 2005 p.57). As a result, subjectivity cannot be ruled out completely. The other drawback is that the methods are chosen to achieve the aim which is to give women "a voice to speak about social life from their perspectives" (Sarantoks, 2005, p. 55). However, its weaknesses are overweighed by its strengths. That is the reason why this study adopted it.

Below is a brief discussion of the critical theory paradigm because some of its critical issues were used in this study.

4.3.2 The critical theory paradigm orientation

The Critical theory paradigm is an intellectual movement rather than a specific theory and may be conceived as a blanket term for several alternative ideological approaches such as feminism, emancipatory movements and participatory inquiry (Guba &Lincoln, 1994).The Critical theory paradigm also has been labelled as a transformative (Mertens, 2010) and

critical ideological paradigm (Ponterotto, 2005). All critical theorists share an interest in seeking not only to study and understand society but also to critique and change society (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).Critical researchers challenge the status quo and the dominant powers in society and encourage action, change and empowerment (Cohen, et al., 2011).

The critical theory paradigm aims are overtly transformative: to emancipate the oppressed and free individuals and society from domination. Thus the purpose of research from a critical theory perspective is not merely to report but to change the status quo (Bertram, 2003; Fay, 1987). That is why some of the critical paradigm aspects were used in this study. However, the goals are not very different from the feminist paradigm, the reason being that the critical paradigm is an umbrella of many theories. The difference is that, the critical theory paradigm focuses on individuals who are oppressed in society and the feminist paradigm talks to one group; women.

The liberal feminist theoretical framework influenced the critical theory paradigm of this study. This is because of the critical paradigm's emancipatory and transformative aspects which are also part of the feminist theory.

The critical theory paradigm shares the same ontological, epistemological and methodological aspects with the feminist paradigm. Critical paradigm theorists argue that, the views of the less powerful should be privileged as they have a more complete view of the world; they have 'double consciousness.' This refers to the knowledge and awareness that oppressed people have of the dominant worldview as well as the worldview of the less powerful, their own. As a result, the reader response theory was employed to give participants the freedom to interpret issues in the texts according to their knowledge and experiences. Freire (1970) describes the duality that oppressed people experience, a duality that they internalise. While Freire advocates pedagogy of the oppressed by the oppressed for the liberation of the oppressed, he states that the oppressed understand better the significance of an oppressive society, who suffer the effects of this oppression and who know the necessity for their emancipation.

Merrian and Simpson (2000) state that feminist research methods give the participants equal power to that of the researcher. Participants are colleagues in the research process and have

equal control of the research. The transactional reader response theory allowed participants to air out what they thought about the issues presented in the feminist literary texts. Feminist theorists work for social change and social justice for women through their scholarship, their teaching and their research. Feminist approaches to research and to knowledge building aim to give voice to women's lived experience, to expose hidden knowledge in women's experiences with the intent of generating women-centred solidarity and social transformation (Brooks, 2007). Research within the critical paradigm utilises approaches that seek to expose hidden relationships and ideas and concepts that lead to an understanding that is directed towards change in an emancipatory direction. In the critical theory paradigm, criticism does not imply negative judgment but refers to action that aims to expose beliefs and attitudes that limit human freedom. The critical theorists approach is to emancipate, that is to uncover aspects of society especially ideologies which maintain the status quo by restricting or limiting different groups' access to the means of gaining knowledge (Mertens, 2010). In this respect, the critical theory paradigm can be understood as research that attempts to identify injustices within a society and as such, explicitly contains a transformative agenda (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005).

4.4 Study design

This study used a qualitative case study approach. A qualitative paradigm is any kind of research that produces findings from "real –world settings, wherein the phenomenon of interest unfolds naturally" (Patton, 2001:39). Grix (2004) gives a more detailed definition of qualitative studies as research that involves the interpretation of data whereby the researcher analyses cases in their social and cultural context. Lamont and White (2005) elaborate that qualitative methodology situates the research in appropriate literature; that is, the study builds upon existing knowledge.

A case study is further defined by Bassey (2010) as a research strategy, an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context. Yin (2014) defines a case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. Therefore, this research is based upon a qualitative case study design. In other words, I used the case study method because I deliberately wanted to cover contextual

conditions in a single case, believing that they might be highly pertinent to my phenomenon of study.

Cresswell (2011) defines the case study as a single instance of a bounded system such as a child, a clique, a class, a school, a community. Bassey (2010) claims that a case study provides a unique example of real people, in real life situations. It enables readers to understand the idea more clearly than simply presenting readers with abstract theories and principles. Indeed, a case study can enable readers to understand how ideas and abstract principles can fit together. The case in this study was: one institution, one disciplinary area, and one broad curriculum with sub- curriculum, specific selected texts and the participants. As a research strategy, the case study is used in many situations to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organisational, social, political, and related phenomena. Not surprisingly, the case study has been a common research strategy in psychology, sociology, political science and social work (Gilgun, 1994). In brief, the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events.

The case study as a research strategy comprises an all-encompassing method covering the logic of design, data collection techniques and specific approaches to data analysis. In this sense, the case study is not either a data collection tactic or merely a design feature alone (Stoecker, 1991) but a comprehensive research strategy. In doing case studies: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observation, and physical artefacts are used (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). These major sources have their comparative strengths and weaknesses but note that no single source has a complete advantage over all the others. In fact, the various sources are highly complementary and a good case study will therefore use as many sources as possible for multiple sources of evidence.

Stake (2000) asserts that a case study might use quantitative as well as qualitative research methods. In my case, the qualitative research method was the most appropriate for it gave me information about the phenomenon I was investigating. However, selecting this study design was a challenge because I wanted a design that would resonate with my theoretical frame works, in this case, the liberal feminist and the transactional reader response theory. Yin (2014) warns that finding an appropriate methodology is a challenge because you have to find a methodology that enables you to maximise the strengths and minimise the

weaknesses of your study. In this respect, I chose a qualitative research paradigm using a case study. The qualitative design was not conflicting with my theoretical framework because the qualitative research design harmonises with the methodologies most often used by feminist researchers. The qualitative design is multi-method in focus (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), so, it enabled me to use different methods to gain information from lecturers and students and get a deeper understanding of the participants than what is impossible through quantitative data (Silverman, 2000).

I used a qualitative case study design approach. A case study seeks a deep understanding of a situation with the purpose of capturing the real life context of an event (Cohen et al., 2011, & Kumar, 2011). Stake (2000) asserts that choosing a case study is not a case of method but a choice of subject to be studied. He further explains that case studies are defined by an interest in individual cases, not by methods of inquiry used. In this case, I was interested in hearing lecturers' and students' views on the feminist literary texts they were engaged with. My interest therefore was on lecturers and students. The lecturers and students had the information that I wanted because they were directly involved with these texts. The study wanted to investigate what students and lecturers think and feel about the patriarchal ideologies that are observable in the feminist texts vis-a-vis their patriarchal orientation. Therefore, a deep understanding of this phenomenon from the lecturers and students was necessary. The transactional reader response theory was used in this case to gather students' and lecturers' views in a real life context. By listening to participants and recording their views verbatim, the study built upon existing knowledge and experiences of participants. As a result of using the transaction reader response theory, the liberal feminist theory went a step further to empower participants by giving them the voices to air out their views. In the end, a comprehensive account of participants' views was produced. Feminist research utilises case studies because they aim at getting detailed accounts of the phenomenon under study, because most times, they deal with women sensitive issues which need serious attention (Banks, 1995). That is the reason why this study utilised a case study in investigating lecturers' and students' views on feminist writings vis-à-vis their patriarchal orientation.

This study is feminist in nature, so the multiple sources were carefully chosen. However, it is important to note that no research method can go unchallenged. Although the case study design was the best design method I could use in my research, it is weak in the sense that its

results cannot be generalised since it focused on a particular group. The results can be subjective since the researcher can have pre-conceived ideas. However, this does not render it inappropriate for this study because this study builds on its strengths. The case study enabled me to answer research questions for this study. I conducted my research at a selected university in Zimbabwe. I used conventional methods; semi-structured interviews, observations, documents and focus groups. I did not rely on conventional methods only but I also used informal conversations to elicit data that helped me to understand how lecturers and students interpret feminist ideologies that are observable in the feminist literary texts they were engaged with. I wanted to elicit data that showed the attitudes of males and females towards these feminist literary texts.

In the following section, I discuss the selection of participants, ethical issues, how I gained access to the university and how I got consent from the participants.

4.4.1 Selection of participants
Demographic data of participants

LECTURERS
Table 1: Distribution of lecturers according to gender and age

SEX	AGE	NUMBER
Female	40	1
	43	1
	48	1
	53	1
Male	40	2
	48	2
	50	1
	55	1

STUDENTS

Table 2: Distribution of students according to gender and age

SEX	AGE	NUMBER
Female	25	3
	28	3
	32	2
	35	1
Male	26	2
	28	3
	29	3
	34	2
	52	1

Purposive sampling was used in this study. Silverman (2000, p. 159) defines sampling as "the procedure to select a subset from the population." Patton (2002, p. 230) elaborates that "purposive sampling focuses on selecting information-rich [participants] whose study will illuminate the questions under scrutiny." Maxwell (1997, p. 87) further explains that sampling is "selecting units, for example, individuals, groups of individuals, and/or institutions based on specific purposes associated with answering a research study's questions." Purposive sampling enabled me to rely on personal judgement to select the sample population believed to be the most amenable to provide quality data (Fraenkel & Warren, 2000). However, to avoid a potential sampling error, I selected the participants who were directly involved in the study of the feminist literary texts at the selected university.

Purposive sampling was done to select university lecturers and students who were engaged with the female feminist literary texts which were used in this study. The feminist literary texts selected were prescribed texts that lecturers were already teaching and students were already studying. I selected the university because that is where I work. I considered cost implications, if I had to go to other universities which are almost three hundred kilometres away from my residential home. The selected university gave me a lot of advantages in that I did not have to look for accommodation as I operated from my home. If I had to go to other universities, this was going to have cost implications on my side. The five months I spent in

the field was quite a long time. I definitely would not have managed to stay in a hotel or a lodge for that long. Operating from any of these locations would mean that I would have hurriedly done my research, which was going to affect the quality of my study.

The students and lecturers I selected were directly involved in analysing the feminist literary texts that were used in this study. I selected ten lecturers and twenty undergraduate Bachelor of Education (honours) students from the university. The ten lecturers taught these students at that time or had this course with other groups. There were six males and four female lecturers. The students were: first year undergraduate students who were doing a Bachelor of Education (honours) degree in English (course code CSE 213). There were eleven male and nine female student participants. The total number of participants was thirty. Student participants were chosen from a population of forty-five students who were doing this module. The remaining students were not doing the texts that this study was focusing on, but they were literature students as well but their participation was irrelevant at that time. I interviewed all lecturers who were involved in teaching this course at the university. Six were directly involved and four were lecturers who taught the course but they did not have any groups to teach at that time. However, I involved them because they taught the English module at the university. When I got to the university at the beginning of the semester, some lecturers and students had not done the texts but some lecturers had done one of the texts with the previous group. The reading of the texts was done during the research study. So, most views that came out during the research were lecturers and students' views before discussions were held during lectures. At times, I gave students extracts to read for focus group discussions in order to monitor how the reader response theory worked on these students. I wanted to get independent views from them. The transactional reader response theory gave participants the freedom to bring their views without influence from either lecturers or from students. To make sure that lecturers and students brought their own interpretations of the text, the participants were given a time frame of four weeks to read the literary texts. From what I gathered through investigations from lecturers, these were first year students and had not studied these texts. It was a different situation from lecturers because some had already taught one of these texts, *Nervous Conditions* to previous groups. However, this was not going to affect the monitoring of the transactional reader response theory since one text was done by some of the lecturers. However, the reader response posits that a reader brings in new knowledge every time he/she interacts with the text; no matter how many times one reads the same text. To me, the lecturers and students had a different orientation which is why

I had to differentiate between the two groups by giving them different sets of questions. The responses from both lecturers were recorded verbatim, which means any interpretation was accepted as the reader response theory states that there are various interpretations to a literary text (Rosenblatt, 1995).

There was not much gender balance because my participants reflect more males than females. There are more male than female lecturers at the university and there are also more male than female students. This reflects the patriarchal nature of the Zimbabwean society that gives boys the privilege to go to school (Chitando, 2011). However, the situation is different now as girls and women now have access to education. Ten years from now, I hope the number of males and females will be balanced in most universities in the country. The difference between the number of male and female participants did not affect the results of this research study in any way.

The selected literary texts were: **Buchi Emecheta's Second Class Citizen (1978)**, Tsitsi Dangarembga's **Nervous Conditions (1988)** and Mariama Bâ's **So Long A Letter (1980)**. Initially in my proposal, I had indicated that I was going to use Buchi Emecheta's **The Joys Of Motherhood** but when I got to the university, they had dropped it and instead were doing her other text, **Second Class Citizen**. This did not inconvenience me in any way because this text deals with the same issues as in the other text which they had dropped. These three literary texts were chosen because of their orientation towards feminist ideologies. These feminist texts were chosen from a number of texts that were being studied in that semester. The three were the only feminist literary texts in the undergraduate English curriculum.

The sampling process was not very easy because I had to identify lecturers and students who were directly involved in the course. Lecturers were busy at the time I got to the university. I had to wait patiently for them to give me the students who were studying the texts at that time. I also wanted a time table from the lecturers and students. There was need for us to negotiate because their time tables were fully packed. Researches of a feminist nature give power to researchers so that in the end, the researcher and the researched share power. The lecturers and students determined where and when the group interviews, individual interviews and lecture observations were to be held. Blacks (1992) states that in a feminist research, those interviewed subtly negotiate power by determining where and when the interviews would be held, who else would be present and what information would be shared.

Finally, I succeeded in negotiating with participants and the research process was set on a sound footing.

4.5 Accessibility and consent

The University of KwaZulu-Natal requires a student to get an ethical clearance letter before going to the field to gather data. I was finally given the clearance letter although there were some delays (see appendix F).

I went back to Zimbabwe at the beginning of 2015 because that is where my research was to be conducted. My research was conducted at a selected university. I also had to get permission from the Registrar of that university which I successfully did (see appendix G).Then lastly, I had to have informed consent from my participants (see appendix A).

It was not an easy process to be allowed to do my research at the university for I had to convince the Registrar that the study which I was embarking on was going to help change the status quo in the undergraduate English curriculum. It would also help conscientise both lecturers and students on the conditions of women at the university and the society at large. The registrar was a woman, so she readily gave me permission to carry out my study. As for students and lecturers, I almost gave them a lecture. I knew what I wanted to do, so I managed to convince them and they accepted to participate in my study. One lecturer shouted from the back, "I hope you are not going to give us questionnaires, we are tired of them here at the university, because every week, we are given *those* things."(I deliberately italicised the word 'those' to show how the lecturer disliked the questionnaire). It was a relief on my side because the questionnaire was not among the research instruments that I was going to use. I explained to the group that I was going to use interviews, focus groups, observations and documents. I had already developed my research instruments, so it was easy to tell them at hand the instruments I was going to use. I could see some relief on their faces and I knew they had accepted my explanation. This takes me to some general reflections on my study.

4.6 Reflections

My study focused on the attitudes of male and female university students and lecturers towards the feminist literary texts they were engaged with.

When I went to the field, I was not sure of my participants' attitudes towards me because of the subject of feminism that I was about to engage with them. The fact that I was a woman researcher pursuing a feminist agenda made me anxious of what was going to happen to my study. I was also worried about how as a subjective being, I was going to address my subjectivity in such a research. However, since I wanted to achieve my goal; I had to overcome the anxiety.

My anxiety was worsened when I got to the university since lecturers and students were busy. The students' timetables were fully packed and the lecturers had busy schedules. I was disturbed and I could see disaster looming. I was not only afraid of failing to gather data but I could also see my dreams of obtaining a PhD being shattered. However, before I went to gather data, my supervisor had equipped me with strategies to overcome such anxieties and honestly the strategies worked! Finally, lecturers and students accommodated me in their busy schedules though it was not easy.

Although I had financial constraints, I had to use the little money that I had to enable me to get what I wanted. On several occasions, I had to provide lunch for students because they did not have much time to get into town to buy lunch. If I did not do that, I would not have had much time with them. At times, I had to take them to their respective lecture venues. Thank God, they did not mind getting onto my lorry, in fact, they were grateful because it enabled them to move from one venue to the other. It was their co-operation that motivated me to go the extra mile to help them.

The lecturers had introduced me to the students as a student who was undertaking studies just like them. This gave me the opportunity to interact with them at will. Although I was familiar to some lecturers because they were my colleagues, some students did not know that I was a member of the university staff, so I did not mind them calling me by my first name; we were all students after all! They would ask me questions on how challenging doing PhD was. Female participants wanted to know how I had managed to pursue my education career that

far in such a society that is dominated by patriarchal ideologies that oppress women. Most of them confirmed that after the first degree, they would not be allowed to go further with education. It was very pathetic listening to their narratives. I had to sympathise with them because this was the main purpose of my study to conscientise such women and encourage them not to lose hope but to stand up for their rights. However, I was careful with my words, lest they misinterpreted my agenda. Most women expressed the fear that their in-laws would not let them pursue their academic careers because they feared they would defy societal norms and values. From these general conversations, I could tell that patriarchy was still engrained in both males and females.

One day, four male participants asked me to take them to their venue where they were going to have the last lecture before our focus group discussions. I was shocked when one of them asked me how I had managed to go that far with my education. He asked me whether my husband was in agreement with what I was doing. I told them that he had agreed but they were not convinced at all. One of them said, *hamusimi vakadzi vanotonga varume mudzimba umu?*(translated it means, are you not one of the radicals in society)?My fears were confirmed here. So, they thought because I was a woman doing a feminist research, I was radical. I thought they had developed a negative attitude towards me and my study. I really had to convince them that I was not radical. I was afraid they would pull out of the research. However, they told me that it was an interesting topic which they liked. What a relief I got when they told me that the study was interesting! This was true because of the way participants participated and how eager they were to share information. They also confirmed that they would love to see their daughters pursuing their academic careers as far as I had gone .So, the data gathering process was a great success.

Below is a discussion of the research instruments I used to elicit data from participants. These methods were informed by the liberal feminist and transactional reader response theory. The methods chosen resonated with these theoretical frameworks' demands of free participation of participants, the methods also allowed for free interpretations of texts by participants. The methods are explained in detail in the following section.

4.7 Data gathering sources: usefulness and challenges

4.7.1 Documents

Documentary information is likely to be relevant to every case study topic. This type of information can take many forms and should be the object of explicit data collection plans. For instance, letters, memoranda, and other communiqués, agendas, announcements and minutes of meetings and other written reports of events, as well as exercise books in cases of students being involved in the research, scheme books and plan books, registers and many other documents. These and other types of documents are useful even though they are not always accurate and may not be lacking in bias. In fact, documents must be carefully used and should not be accepted as literal recordings of events that have taken place (Maree, 2012).

I used documents to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources that I used, that is, from interviews, focus groups and observation. So, I used students' assignments to get other specific details to corroborate information from other sources I have mentioned above. From these documents, I wanted to find out how students responded to questions pertaining to feminist ideologies presented in the feminist literary texts. I also wanted to find out how they expressed their views on the literary texts they were studying. (The findings are discussed in chapter five). This method gave me the advantage that I did not have to make personal contact with the participants (Rapley, 2008).The transactional reader response theory which was used to record students' views advocates for independent interpretation of texts. In the documents: students could express their views without anyone's interference or guidance. The transactional reader response theory advocates for an individual's own interpretation of a situation. So, the use of students' assignments provided that platform. However, some students failed to articulate themselves because of lack of linguistic skills thereby providing scanty information on the phenomenon in question. Bailey (1994) asserts that lack of linguistic skills may thus negatively influence the contents of the documents. Thus, this becomes one of the drawbacks of document analysis, but it helped me to get information from participants.

However, because of their overall value, documents played an explicit role in my data collection especially that I was doing a case study. Therefore, they remained an important

tool of data collection in this study although many people have been critical of the potential overreliance on documents in case study research. In my case, I did not rely excessively on documents because it was a method used alongside others.

Beside documentary study, the study utilised interviews which are described in detail below. Interviewing was to assist in triangulating data collected through the other methods. It is important to highlight that experiences from my own interviews are going to be used in this section.

4.7.2 Interviews: an overview

An interview is a two-way conversation in which the interviewer asks the participant questions to collect data and to learn about the ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviours of the participant. Hence, there was need to employ the transactional reader response theory to obtain data from participants. Participants in this study interpreted texts from their own experiences, knowledge, beliefs, norms and values amongst many others. Interviewing people provides insight into their world, their opinions, thoughts and feelings. The aim of qualitative interviews is to see the world through the eyes of the participant and they can be valuable sources of information, provided they are used correctly. The aim is to obtain rich descriptive data that will help the researcher to understand the participant's construction of knowledge and social reality. If the persons being interviewed think the topic is important and the researcher is trustworthy, they will give information that will not be able to be collected in any other way (Maree, 2012). DePoy and Gilson (2008) state that interviewing is a predominant mode of collecting data or information in qualitative research. Researchers obtain information through direct interchange with an individual or a group that is known or expected to possess the knowledge they seek.

In my case, I employed an interview as a data collection source because of its relevance to my case study design research and the transactional reader response theory. Information from a group of lecturers and students was obtained; these participants were purposefully selected due to the fact that I assumed they possessed the knowledge that I was seeking. I wanted to get their views on the representation of feminist literary texts in their English curriculum and

as well as their views of these texts. The other reason for choosing the interview as a means of eliciting data is because it is reliably used in research studies that are feminist in nature. Feminists believe that interviews should bring the researcher and participant together for this makes them understand each other as they explore the phenomenon together. Feminist research is concerned with building a good relationship between researcher and participant (Biber & Leavy, 2007).

Interviews are an essential source of case study evidence because most case studies are about human affairs. These human affairs should be reported and interpreted through the eyes of specific interviewees and well-informed respondents can provide important insights into a situation. They also can provide shortcuts to the prior history of the situation, helping the researcher to identify other relevant sources of evidence (Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2012).

The research study sought to investigate lecturers' and students' views on feminist literary texts and to find out why lecturers and students hold the views they have on these feminist texts they were engaged with. Feminists assert that views are at times affected by historical factors of the situation in question. The situation in question in this study was the inadequate representation of feminist literary texts in the selected university undergraduate English curriculum and lecturers and students' attitudes towards these literary texts. (A detailed analysis of their views is presented in chapter five).

However, the interviews should always be considered verbal reports only. As such, they are subject to the common problems of bias, poor recall and poor or inaccurate articulation. However, I used the interviews because I wanted to get participants' attitudes towards feminist texts. In most cases, attitudes can be exhibited by non-verbal cues. The interview has advantages of such social cues as voice, intonation, body language such as facial expressions among other non-verbal cues. From these cues, I got extra information that I added to the verbal answers of the participants. Again, it is a most reasonable approach to corroborate interview data with information from other sources. In my case, I used interviews to corroborate information from observations, focus groups and documents to counter biases, poor recall and inaccurate articulation.

4.7.3 Types of interviews

Different authors have come up with different types of interviews that can be used in quantitative and qualitative research. The number of types of interview given is frequently a function of sources one reads (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). My intention here is not to give an exhaustive list of the types of interviews I have read but to focus on the type of interview appropriate to this study and appropriate to a qualitative case study, the semi-structured and focus groups interviews. I focused my attention on the semi-structured interview because of its tenets that go hand in glove with the purpose and type of study that I was doing.

This study is feminist in nature, so the semi-structured interview was the most appropriate method that enabled me to elicit data from the participants. This method allows flexibility and diversity of ideas therefore making it appropriate in a qualitative case study research of a feminist nature, where controversial issues are discussed.

4.7.4 The semi-structured interview

The semi-structured interview is commonly used in research projects to corroborate data emerging from other data sources. It seldom spans a long time period and usually requires the participant to answer a set of pre-determined questions. It does allow for the probing and clarification of answers. This is one reason why I used it instead of the other interviewing methods mentioned above. Semi-structured interview schedules basically define the line of inquiry. The researcher must be attentive to the responses of the participant in order to identify new emerging lines of inquiry that are directly related to the phenomenon being studied and explore and probe these. At the same time, it is easy to get side tracked by trivial aspects that are not related to the study. If this happens, there is need to guide the participant back to the focus of the interview. I used the semi-structured interview because I wanted to gain a detailed picture on the participants' beliefs and perceptions towards the feminist literary texts they were doing. Vos et al. (2012) assert that semi-structured interviews are used by researchers to gain a detailed picture of a participant's beliefs about, or perceptions or accounts of a particular topic. The perceptions of lecturers and students were gathered

through the use of the transactional reader response theory. Their own beliefs and perceptions about the feminist ideologies observable in the feminist texts they were engaged with were easy to gather through the transactional reader response theory. A qualitative case study of a feminist nature utilises such type of an interview because it gives room for detailed explanation from the participant. The phenomenon under study is controversial, so there was need for the researcher to give participants the freedom to express themselves.

The nature of the semi-structured interview helped me to elicit information from both lecturers and students as the questions were semi- structured. This gave me the opportunity to follow up on their views about these texts. I was able to probe and ask for clarification of answers freely and the participants were able to explain fully what they felt about the texts. The questions were open-ended, one characteristic of a semi-structured interview. The method gave me and the participants much more flexibility so that I was able to follow up particular interesting avenues that emerged in the interview. Vos et al. (2012) point out that the method gives the researcher and participants the leverage to discuss issues. The method was also used to corroborate data from observations, focus groups and document analysis methods used in this study. Maree (2012) posits that a semi-structured interview can be used to corroborate data emerging from other data sources.

However, I had to be cautious in using this method for I had to control the flow of the interview in a professional way so as not to embarrass the participants or scare them away. This was not easy as participants had a lot to say on this topic although some of the issues they wanted to discuss were not relevant at that time. I had to promise one of the participants that I was going to make time to discuss the issues that he was so much interested in. I honestly did because I did not want to disappoint him, lest he lost his trust in me and withdraw from the study. However, the method was advantageous to me because participants brought in other irrelevant ideas during the interview but I managed to control and guide them. Maree (2012) advises that because of the open-endedness of the questions, it is easy to be side-tracked by participants, so, the researcher has to guide back the participants to the focus of the interview.

Although the reader response theory that was used to gather data from participants allows diversity, there were times when I had to control the flow of events because some participants

had a lot of stories to tell .Some of the issues they brought in were irrelevant and we were going to spend time discussing irrelevant issues, so I had to intervene politely for us to remain focused.

The other drawback that needs special attention in dealing with semi-structured interviews is its nature of allowing participants to give their own unlimited responses on the phenomenon under study. The researcher can be led into discussing issues that are not directly related to the phenomenon, rendering the method weak. I experienced this with one female participant who had a lot to share on how her mother-in-law treated her despite the fact that she was spoiling her with goodies. She was very emotional about it to the extent that she did not provide me adequately with the information I wanted to get from her. However, the transactional reader response theory states that readers can bring their emotions and knowledge (Rosenblatt, 1991). Anyway, I had to tell her politely that we would make time to discuss the issue during lunch time when we did not have a busy schedule. Otherwise if I was not careful, I would have ended up recording a lot of information that had little to do with the phenomenon under study. Although this proved to be one of its weaknesses, I managed to use it successfully with some participants who had a lot of relevant information to share on the topic, in those instances, this weakness turned out to be strength on my part. Despite the weaknesses associated with using the semi-structured interview as a source of gathering data, a researcher can utilise those weaknesses and can get the information that is needed but this should be done cautiously.

4.7.5 An evaluation on interviews

Overall, although interviews are considered to be the best methods in eliciting data from participants, they are also considered to be the weakest of methodologies because the participant is likely to provide the researcher with the 'official account' which is not really valid (Vos et al., 2012). They also involve personal interaction, and cooperation is therefore essential. Participants may be unwilling to share information and the researcher may ask questions that do not elicit the desired responses from participants. Furthermore, the responses may be misconstrued or even, at times, untruthful (Seidman, 1998). Interviews are a resource demanding data collection method. Activities such as planning, conducting and analysing are time consuming by nature. From my own experience, the bulk of my time was

taken on planning and conducting the interviews, I would not mention the resources I had to input for the interviews to be a success. As if this was not enough, the transcription process gave me a hard time as it was time consuming and tedious. I had to completely ignore my social life in order to finish the task at hand.

Although their weaknesses cannot go unnoticed, interviews are a useful way of getting large amounts of data quickly and an especially effective way of obtaining depth in data (Maree, 2012). So far, most researchers use this method because there are no significant delays between questions and answers. The interviewer and the interviewee can directly react to what the other says or does. The answer of the interviewee is more spontaneous, without an extended reflection. Interviews can be tape-recorded, of course with permission from the interviewee. Using a tape recorder has the advantage that the interview report is more accurate than writing notes. However, taking notes is important for the interviewer in case the tape malfunctions. In interviewing, the researcher can take advantage of the social cues such as voice, intonation and body language of the interviewee. This can give the interviewer a lot of extra information that can be added to the verbal answer of the interviewee on a question. Interviewing people provides insight into their world, their opinions, thoughts and feelings.

Despite the weaknesses, interviewing remains the best method of gathering data in research. All the facts mentioned above about interviewing were the reasons why I used interviewing as a method of gathering data in my research. Honestly speaking, the bulk of my data came from interviewing. This was the best method among the others that I used.

Below, I discuss the focus groups as a method of gathering data. Although it falls under interviews, I decided to discuss it in isolation from the other interviewing methods because of its characteristics which differ from the above mentioned interviewing methods.

4.7.6 Focus groups

It is important to differentiate focus group interviews from the other types of interviews mentioned above. Although they are all interviews, the other types are individual interviews, in which an interviewer and a participant talk about a theme of common interest. In group interviews, also known as focus groups, several subjects discuss topics introduced by an interviewer. The focus group method proved to be very effective in this study. Students came

up with diverse and interesting views on the feminist literary texts they were studying. The transactional reader response theory provided a platform for participants to bring out their different interpretations of the feminist ideologies observable in the feminist texts. On focus group discussions, social reader-response theory by Stanley Fish proved to be very effective(a detailed explanation of this theory was made in chapter three). In this case, students as a community were focused on the reading of feminist literary texts which needed their interpretation of feminist ideologies that are observable in these texts. This approach was not used in isolation from others, in fact, all reader response theory approaches concentrate on the reader's interpretation of a text and how a reader constructs meaning. However, during focus group discussions, the social reader response proved to be most appropriate. As a community, students shared ideas on different beliefs and norms. They were able to negotiate with each other on several issues.

A detailed explanation of the focus group interview is provided below.

Focus groups are group interviews. Fielding (2003) defines focus groups as a research method that gathers data through cluster interaction on a topic determined by the researcher. Vos et al. (2012) define focus groups as a means of enhanced understanding of how people feel and contemplate about an issue, product or service. Participants are selected because they have certain characteristics in common that relate to the topic of the focus group. The group is "focused" in that it involves some kind of collective activity. The researcher creates a tolerant environment that encourages participants to share perceptions, points of view, experiences, wishes and concerns without pressurising participants to vote or reach consensus (Kruger & Casey, 2000).

Many researchers argue that focus group interviews produce data that is rich in detail that is difficult to achieve with other research methods but it may happen that some participants experience focus group as threatening; this is possible, and the researcher has to make careful observations (Maree, 2012).

The use of focus groups in this study was purposefully done. The sampling of participants was purposive. I selected participants who showed interest in the topic. For three weeks, I was an observer and my main purpose was to make observations of participants whom I was going to involve in my focus groups. I was observing students who had a keen interest in the

area. I made the right observations because the participants I chose were very vocal in as far as feminist issues were discussed. I also looked at age variances because I wanted to get views from all age groups. The age groups ranged from twenty-five to fifty-two. The focus groups comprised students only. There were two groups, the first group had five females and five males and the second group had four females and six males. I did not have focus group interviews with lecturers because I wanted to have time with them during interview sessions. The other reason why I could not hold focus group interviews with them is that they complained that their schedules were busy. I did not mind that because they had agreed to participate in the interviews. Two focus groups from students were sufficient for me to get the information I wanted.

I used focus group interviews because I wanted to hear students' perceptions towards the female feminist literary texts they were studying through interacting with each other. Their different viewpoints and responses were what I needed on this topic. One important goal of my study was to see males and females discussing and agreeing on certain issues in as far as gender discrepancies are concerned. The focus group discussion was also chosen because of the feminist nature of my study. Feminists believe that there is inequality between men and women. So, the discussion would close the gap that exists between men and women because of patriarchal ideologies that are engraved in both sexes in reference to the Zimbabwean setting. Focus groups are a powerful means of exposing reality and of investigating complex behaviour and motivation. The literary texts that were being studied by these students portray the reality of the pathetic situation of women and girls in patriarchal societies. Therefore, in conducting focus groups, I aimed at bringing together both sexes to understand the complexity of the status of women as portrayed by the female feminist authors and how this portrayal is reflective of the situation of women and girls in Zimbabwe.

The focus groups permitted both males and females to share their individual experiences and at the end, women felt more empowered because of the support that came from their male colleagues. This is one goal of liberal feminists, that men and women should sit together and try to understand each other and remove the barriers that prevent them from operating on equal terms. Krueger and Casey (2000) maintain that people feel fairly empowered and supported in a cluster situation where they are surrounded by others. They may also be more likely to share experiences and outlooks in the presence of people whom they recognise to be like themselves in some way.

The feminist nature of my study relied on focus groups as a means of gathering data in the sense that spontaneous exchanges of ideas, thoughts and attitudes in a group promote a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study. The complexities of feminism need exchange of ideas, attitudes and thoughts, and this was done during focus group discussions. Despite the fact that focus groups helped me to elicit the information that I wanted, it had its drawbacks. It was very difficult at times for all the members of the group to come to the designated room at the same time. At times I had to wait for more than forty-five minutes for the members to come. Some gave excuses that they had transport problems and others said that the last lecture always took their time. I had to contend with that because I feared that some group members would withdraw as the consent letters they had signed allowed them to do so. I had to be patient because that was my core business at the university at that time. Maree (2012) asserts that focus groups have difficulties in that participants must be able to assemble in the same place at the same time, which is not easy to achieve especially if the participants come from geographically distant areas.

The other drawback that I encountered was the outspoken nature of some of the participants. They would dominate the entire group and would want to talk all the time more than others. This aspect is unsafe in the sense that the information gathered may be biased, but thank God, my supervisor had equipped me with that information, so I was ready for that. I was able to contain the situation because of the advice that I got from my supervisor and the warning I read from Maree (2012) that the information collected may be biased through focus group processes such as domination of the discussions by the more outspoken individuals.
Below is a discussion of observation as a method of gathering data.

4.7.7 Observation

Observation is an everyday activity whereby we use our senses of seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting, but also our intuition to gather bits of data. Maree (2012) defines observation as the orderly process of recording the interactive patterns of participants, objects and occurrences without necessarily questioning or communicating with them. Simpson and Tuson (2003) noted that observation is more than just viewing. It is looking and noting methodically, people, events, behaviours, settings, artefacts and habits. Cohen et al. (2011) observe that the distinct feature of observation as a research procedure is that it offers an

investigator the opportunity to gather "live" data from naturally occurring social situations. In the lectures, I took the role of observer as participant. Maree (2012) describes an observer as participant- researcher who gets into the location but focuses mainly on his or her role as observer in the location. The researcher may look for characteristics of behaviour in a particular community to understand the suppositions, values and beliefs of the participants and to make sense of the dynamics but the researcher remains uninvolved and does not influence the dynamics of the setting. Cohen et al. (2011) describe an observer as participant whose role as researcher is clear and overt, as unobtrusive as possible. The observation was highly organised because I knew in advance what I wanted. Cohen et al. (2011) contend that, in a extremely structured observation, the researcher will know in advance what he or she will be looking for. I used anecdotal records to capture the actions that I was observing. Maree (2012) describes anecdotal records as short descriptions of basic actions observed apprehending key phrases or words and should be objective with no self-reflective notes.

The main purpose of my study was to investigate lecturers' and students' attitudes towards the feminist literary texts they were engaged with. In investigating attitudes, there is need to observe the behaviour of participants towards the phenomenon under study. The non-verbal cues are very important in trying to find out attitudes of people towards a certain phenomenon. Bailey (1994) asserts that observation is important in recording non-verbal behaviour in normal settings. Non-verbal and verbal cues complement each other in getting the attitudes of participants. As I said previously that feminism is a current and debatable issue; observation was very important to this study. Therefore, taking notes was central to my observational data. I noticed that lecturers and students were less apprehensive when I started taking notes than when I was using a tape recorder.

Participants showed emotions during discussions. At times, the lecture would go out of control because of the arguments raised. Bailey (1994) maintains that lack of control in observing in natural settings may render observation less useful. This is one major drawback I encountered with this method of data gathering. In the lectures, catchy words and phrases were used. The most common were: women oppression, exploitation, patriarchy, socialisation, abusive relationships and second class citizens were discussed coupled with non-verbal cues. I understood the complexity of the topic through lecture observations.

The students at times were asked to read extracts they were given in lectures. I observed that most students were totally fully absorbed in the reading. This was so because after reading, students had to come up with their own interpretations of these extracts they were given. They were motivated because each individual student had to bring out his/her views according to how he/she understood the extracts they were given. Their concentration and interest in the reading made me believe that the phenomenon I was engaging them with was very important. Maree (2012) maintains that observation enables the researcher to gain a deeper insight and understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

Although observation was used as a useful method of gathering data in this study to corroborate data from other sources mentioned above, however, it has its weaknesses. Maree reports that, overall, observation is not only time consuming but is prone to bias in terms of what, why, when, where, who and how the observer is noting. As a feminist researcher pursuing feminist agenda, obviously I had a bias towards feminist goals. Feminist researchers at times bring in their subjectivity in research. One forty-eight year old participant was frowning describing how educated women lack respect, I almost forgot to record his behaviour because honestly, I was disturbed. Anyway, I quickly got back to my notebook and took notes. I had to restrain myself from being biased, which I successfully did, of course with hitches because I was eager to get the information I wanted. Cohen et al. (2011) also warn about researchers who become subjective and render the method ineffective.

The following section discusses the last method I used in this study to collect data, namely, informal conversations. This method came to my mind during the course of the field work. At first, I thought the method was my own innovation but I quickly remembered that Morojele (2009) had also used this method in his study of gender socialisation.

4.7.8 Informal conversations

As a feminist researcher, I had to employ other methods to elicit data from lecturers and students. I used informal conversations. Hart (2006) contends that in a research of a feminist nature, one has to employ as many methods as possible because of the controversial nature of the topic.

After focus group discussions, I would join students on their way to board taxis. I would probe them to continue with the conversation from the interviews. This was a very effective way of getting information especially in a more informal setting. Students were able to air out their views using their indigenous language. This was very interesting. At these times, I would get new information that I would not have thought about myself because students could express themselves in their own language. At times I had to go out of my way taking students to their different areas of residence using my car. At other times, I would have lunch with them at my expense. I had a tight budget at that time because I did not get funding on time but I had to use the little that I had to make sure that my study was a success. This method was successful; I continually did it with different groups of students. I made sure that I was at a strategic point every time I wanted to take a different group. Thank God, I had established a good rapport with the students, so it was not difficult for me to join them in the informal conversations.

However, the method presented some challenges because at times the participants wandered away from the topic and there was no way I would tell them that what they were talking about was irrelevant to the information I wanted. This topic is a topical issue and participants had many stories to tell. I had to patiently listen to their stories, but I would bring in mine at an opportune time. This was done to identify with them. In feminist research process, it is necessary for participants to have equal relationships with the researcher, to have a more interactive relationship with the participants (Hart, 2006).

I wanted to have dialogues with students as well but this method was a total failure. I could not have the chance to have informal dialogues with any one student. I made effort but I totally failed. Even now, I do not understand why this method failed. However, the other methods were sufficient enough for data triangulation.

4.8 Triangulation

Data triangulation gave me confidence in that the data generated were not from a single source. This gave me confidence in that the results from interviews, observations, documents focus groups and informal conversations yielded almost the same results. Of course there were some differences here and there but they were not significant. Triangulation is defined

by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour. Borg and Gall (2003) insist that triangulation uses different methods to assess the same aspect of a phenomenon. Therefore, the use of one method may bias or distort the researcher's picture of the particular slice of reality she/he is investigating. So, the use of multiple methods gives the researcher confidence of his /her data. However, there is danger associated with using various sources in the gathering of date. The overwhelming amounts of data gathered through these multi-methods require management and one can get lost in the analysis of the data (Tuckett & Stewart, 2004). In order to bring some order to the voluminous amount of data collected, it is often necessary to organise and manage data accurately from these multiple sources (Tuckett & Stewart, 2004).

4.9 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis is an iterative and reflexive process that begins as data are being elicited rather than after data elicitation has ceased (Stake, 2000). The purpose of conducting a qualitative study is to produce findings. Findings are produced through data analysis and data analysis brings order, structure and meaning to the data gathered. Patton (2002), states that qualitative analysis transforms data into findings. This involves reducing the volume of raw information, sifting significance from trivia, identifying significant patterns and constructing a framework of communicating the essence of what the data reveal. Patton's description of data analysis means that one has to reduce the data to comprehensive and manageable proportions. This can be achieved by coding the data and coding according to Patton (2010), is the translation of question responses and respondent information to specific categories for the purpose of analysis. Newby (2010) refers to this coding as 'tagging.' This tagging or coding enabled me to identify similar information from different participants.

My data analysis began in the early stages of my research. Analysis was done each and every day I visited the university. I made use of the liberal feminist theoretical framework and the transactional reader response theory to analyse the data gathered. I coded data as I identified the emerging themes. In explaining further on coding, Miles and Huberman (1994) add that, in a coding system, codes represent key concepts and ideas in the text which enable the researcher to make sense of the data. Making sense of the data was not easy for me. I had

voluminous data from interviews, observations, focus groups and documents. This was very demanding and tedious. I had to spend a lot of time on this process. Although it was demanding and tedious, I really enjoyed it because to me, it was creative and fascinating. At times I would replay the audio tape just to capture some of the fascinating statements uttered by participants; this would make me laugh and make me forget how tedious the task was.

Data were analysed using content analysis.According to Cohen et al. (2011), content analysis is a process that involves classifying text data into categories and themes. Content analysis allows the researcher to have a subjective interpretation of text data and to develop some codes which would later be collapsed to themes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). A theme is a collection of ideas that are closely related (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). Thematic analysis was applied which is a method for organising, analysing and reporting categorised ideas (themes) of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis was ideal in this case because it helped me to organise and describe data in rich detail. Information from all data collecting instruments was presented concurrently on each research question, to enhance validity and reliability of the findings. Thematic analysis in which data were sorted and categorised according to emerging themes in the codes was useful in enabling the study to elucidate feminist ideological views in feminist literary texts. Consequently, analysis unearthed how participants' views in the construction of meaning from the feminist literary texts, reproduce gender inequality. I learnt from lecturers and students how the university undergraduate English curriculum can be transformed.

Framed within the feminist and critical paradigms, opinions, attitudes and feelings were sought in order to critically analyse, using liberal feminist and reader response lenses, how lecturers and students interpret meaning from feminist literary texts.

Data in this study were organised, transcribed and analysed. I read the data thoroughly, divided it into segments of information and labelled each segment of information with thematic codes. I searched for patterns in coded data to categorise them and information overlapping as redundancies was removed from codes. Lastly, codes were collapsed into themes and each theme was discussed in detail.

4.10 Trustworthiness

After the transcription of data, I went back to participants for confirmation. I wanted them to confirm that I had represented their views accurately without any distortions. This was done to enhance validity by ensuring trustworthiness and credibility (Gibbert & Ruigrok, 2010). I transcribed the work, and also enhanced the validity by ensuring that there were adequate resources for the research to be undertaken. I avoided the biased choice of research participants by choosing participants who were directly engaged with the feminist literary texts under study. I also avoided poor coding of data and subjective interpretation of data (Cohen et al., 2011). An important strategy to ensure the validity of a case study is the triangulation of different sources of data (Gibbert & Ruigrok, 2010). This was done in this study and the process of triangulation has been discussed above. There is also need for conformability in a qualitative research study.

4.11 Conformability

Conformability in this study was built on audit trails and it involved the use of written field notes, a field diary and personal notes. Therefore, any other person conducting the same study would confirm the findings of the study. However, Guba and Lincoln (1985) assert that, qualitative research tends to assume that each researcher brings a unique perspective to the study. Conformability therefore refers to the degree to which the results can be confirmed or corroborated by others. A number of strategies exist for enhancing conformability in qualitative study. The researcher can document the procedures employed for checking and rechecking the data throughout the study. Conformability therefore refers to the confirmation of the trustworthiness of the data. In this study, experienced coders re-coded and confirmed the data. An audit trail, which included the dates of interviews, the names of participants and the university at which the research was carried out, a letter to the university seeking permission to carry out the research and the notes taken during the interviews were used to ensure the conformability of the data.

4.12 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed how the design, paradigm and methods of gathering data in this study helped me to get views from lecturers and students on the feminist literary texts they were engaged with. The qualitative case study I chose was discussed in detail. The orientation of the feminist and critical paradigms was also provided. The methods that were employed were interviews, observations, focus groups, documents and informal conversations. These were found to be appropriate for a feminist research. The challenges I encountered during the data collection process were narrated. Most of all, the ontological, epistemological and methodological position of this study were discussed.

The next chapter analyses data gathered.

CHAPTER FIVE

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENT WITH FEMINIST LITERARY TEXTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses data that was elicited from ten research participants from a selected university in Zimbabwe. Individual interviews and observations were used to elicit data from participants.

The chapter revolves around the reflection on how I made sense of the data from the voices recorded during the interviews and data recorded from lecture observations. I attempted to keep data in the participants' own language. The common questions used in the interviews were informed by the critical research questions which guided me in this study. This chapter is dedicated to the presentation of data elicited from the sources mentioned in chapter four in this study. Interview data was presented first then corroborated by data from observations and students' assignments. The participants' views were recorded and analysed from a reader response theory in general and the transactional reader response theory in particular. The study investigated students and lecturers separately because of their different orientation to these texts. Lecturers have experience in teaching these texts and some of the lecturers had taught one of the texts with previous groups. However, this did not disqualify them from this research since the reader response theory states that a reader can have different interpretations of the same text at different times.

In my presentation, I cited *verbatim* quotes from participants with the intention to produce coherent arguments that strengthened my presentation as well as to give the participants a voice. I tried to elicit the normal experiences of the participants through their interpretations, since the study is situated within the qualitative approach. The participants' views were viewed through the lens of the liberal feminist and reader response theories. Therefore, diverse interpretations were accepted in this study. Derrida's deconstruction theory postulates that all texts exhibit 'difference' in that they allow multiple interpretations. He argues that we cannot reach an end point of interpretation, a truth. He further explains that textuality always gives us a surplus of possibilities. He postulates that all texts have ambiguity and because of

this possibility, a final complete interpretation is impossible (Moi, 1985).Therefore, the interpretations made in this study were not an end but a means to ascertain how participants construct meaning from feminist literature.

Derrida deconstructs the traditional way of analysing texts from a male perspective where women were given an inferior position and men given a superior position in society (Humm, 1987). He deconstructs the male/female binary and shows how it is socially constructed and he explains that binary positions are culturally variable. For instance, the term man can be used to signify human but woman can only refer to the special case of a female human being. Consequently, the two ends of the polarity are by no means on equal terms. Rather, one is privileged and the other suppressed. The former is given great priority over the latter (Moi, 1985). As feminists have pointed out, woman is often defined as an insufficient man lacking certain male features, especially the penis (Selden, 1989).The texts were viewed from a female perspective; therefore this study adopts a feminist interpretation of literary texts thereby breaking away from the tradition of analysing female and male characters from a male perspective. Therefore in this study, I engaged in a constructive and critical dialogue of gender issues pertaining to the texts under study in pursuit of and as an advocate for social justice. As feminism is a broad array of ideas, I employed its central tenets as a tool to elaborate a constructive and critical dialogue with gender issues as manifest in the texts under study. As a female researcher, pursuing a feminist agenda, I also want to acknowledge that my subjectivity might manifest in my analysis because of my inclination towards feminism as I have revealed in chapter four. "…since we bring our subjectivities, our personalities, our predispositions and our quirks" (Sipe & Ghiso, 2004, pp.482-3).

5.2 Findings

The following section presents data that were elicited from lecturers through interviews and observations. The presentation was done thematically. The categories that emanated from the data formed the basic units of my analysis. The themes that emerged from the data were grouped according to the critical research questions which dealt with specific aspects in the study. I adhered to the use of themes (Creswell, 2009) as highlighted in Chapter Four. In this chapter, I wanted to understand participants' definitions of reality from their views and what they defined as truth or facts in their situation (Denscombe, 2003). I also wanted to get the knowledge that was constructed by these participants (Cresswell, 2009).

I discussed the following themes to answer my first critical question: What are lecturers' views on feminist literary texts? Letters of the alphabet were adopted in this chapter to identify participants.

Male lecturer A=M-LA

Female lecturer D=F-LD

Lecturers' views on feminist literary texts

Below are the themes that emanated from the interviews;

- Conscientisation of males and females
- Education as a tool to liberate women
- Women oppression
- Marriage as an institution that oppresses women
- Rebellion
- Female and male relationships
- Women creativity

- Representation of feminist literary texts in the undergraduate English curriculum.

The twentieth century saw many women writers emerging. These writers brought up sensitive issues on women that no one had ever dared to talk about. Amongst the female authors, feminist writers emerged. They tackle women issues in a way that unsettles different societies. The themes they discuss as well as their portrayal of male and female characters contest patriarchal ideologies in Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular (Chindedza, 2012). The issues are controversial and have attracted the attention of many scholars. The discussions held in this chapter, through the transactional reader response theory, break the silence and transform it into a deafening roar as participants narrate their own experiences.

The reading of these texts was done by lecturers during the research process. They had prescribed these texts for their students. I discovered that one of the novels, *Nervous Conditions* had been done by three lecturers with the previous groups but the other two, *Second Class Citizens* and *So Long A Letter* were not done.

The reader response theory allows for multiple interpretations of the text. It also allows for diversity of interpretations, depending on the emotions and knowledge of the reader on the phenomenon under discussion. An individual can have different interpretations of the text depending on his or her emotional state (Tyson, 2006). Therefore, in recording participants' views, inconsistences and contradictions were found in individuals. In some cases, the participant contradicted himself/herself. The reasons for some of these contradictions are explained in chapter seven of this thesis.

Below are lecturers' views on the themes that emerged from the data.

5.2.1 Conscientisation of males and females

Conscientisation of males and females is making them aware of things that they may have taken for granted.

What emerged was that most lecturers believe that feminist literary texts are appropriately set because they conscientise males and females on the problems that befall women in a patriarchal society such as Zimbabwe. Much feminist literary criticism is intent upon the examination of texts with the purpose of improving real lives, not knowledge for knowledge's sake and many feminist critics might not ask what a work means, but what it does to make the world a better place for real people(Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). The themes that emerge from these texts are a testimony that women need to be looked at from a perspective of social justice. Most participants sympathised with female characters. However, because of some participants' patriarchal orientation, they were caught in some cases criticising female characters, especially female characters that left their matrimonial homes. Generally, participants supported female characters where they felt that they were downtrodden. For example, participants made such comments as; *women should not remain in abusive marriages, they should walk out on these men like what female characters in the three texts do.* This showed some conscientisation in both female and male participants. Most male and female lecturers identified with female characters in *Nervous Conditions*, *So Long A Letter* and *Second Class Citizen.*

Feminist literary criticism posits that, women in literature were historically presented as objects seen from a male perspective (Villaverde, 2008). The advent of feminism brought in a

new dimension where women are seen from a female perspective as human beings. The participants gave examples of women who contributed financially in their families. Adah in **Second Class Citizen**, Aissotou in **So Long A Letter** and Maiguru in **Nervous Conditions,** are educated and they contribute to the economic development of their families. The participants observed that these women are intelligent and hardworking, and what they need is recognition from their husbands and relatives. In the texts under study, these women are not given due attention and their efforts are not appreciated. *Maiguru in **Nervous Conditions** comes back, not because she longed to be in her matrimonial home but because she is a victim of patriarchy.* This comment was made by a male participant pertaining to the position of women in society.

Most lecturers supported Aissotou in **So Long A Letter** and Adah in **Second Class Citizen** decisions to move away from their matrimonial homes and criticised Maiguru who initially had made a good decision to run away but eventually comes back. The radical feminist theory advocates for self-emancipation of women like what Adah and Aissotou do in **Second Class Citizen** and **So Long A Letter,** respectively. Most lecturers' views were in agreement with the feminist ideologies that men should be conscientised on the capabilities of women. Below are lecturers' views on conscientisation:

> *Men need to change their way of thinking towards women, In **Nervous Conditions,** Maiguru is not recognised although she has the same qualifications with her husband, Babamukuru. In **Second Class Citizen,** Adah is beaten by Francis almost every day. Francis does not work, he and the children depend on Adah's income but he does not appreciate her. But with these feminist ideologies coming up, I think men will realise that women need equal treatment in society and also to consider them as human beings with capabilities* (**M-LA**).

The same sentiments relating to conscientisation were echoed by female lecturer D:

> *These feminist literary texts are conscientising men and women on the importance of respecting the women folk. Babamukuru in **Nervous Conditions** is able to spoil the extended family because of Maiguru who is contributing financially to the Sigauke family. Jeremiah is lazy and the wife fends for the family, what he is good at is drinking beer and womanising. In **Second Class Citizen**, Adah takes care of the family including Francis, her husband and in **So Long A Letter,** Aissotou and*

Ramatoulaye takes care of the family while their husbands are busy chasing after young girls. This is very painful. The woman's condition has to be changed urgently. These texts are trying to conscientise men to appreciate women. This is very possible if men and women are re-educated (**F-LD**).

Female lecturer F who strongly advocated for women's emancipation lamented:

It is unfair for Babamukuru to treat Maiguru (referring to a female character in **Nervous Conditions***) that way when she also works and brings money in the family. He is an example of a typical patriarchal figure that is entrapped in traditional practices. (She hates male-domination). That is why she runs away at a certain point in the novel because she is not happy with the way Babamukuru behaves, she rebels. But after a day or two, she comes back. She made a mistake; If it were me, I would not have come back, I would have done what Aissotou and Adah did. These men need to be conscientised, and thank God, these feminist authors are just doing that. I hope the gospel would also reach the society at large.* (**F-LF**).

The above three lecturers showed that they were not happy with the way women in the literary texts are treated. They said these women work very hard but their husbands do not appreciate their good works. Their argument was that, there is need for conscientisation of society, especially men. The lecturers gave examples of female characters that work very hard but at the end of the day, their spouses do not recognise who they are. Male lecturer A gave an example of Adah and Maiguru who bring food to the table but they are not recognised by both husbands and relatives. Babamukuru is praised for being a provider when, in actual fact, it is Maiguru's salary that enables him to spoil the extended family. Adah on the other hand, sends her husband to school but in both cases, the male lecturer observed that their husbands do not appreciate their efforts. Female lecturer D gave an example of Ramatoulaye and Aissotou who are left with the burden of taking care of the children while their husbands enjoy life outside the home. The female lecturer expressed concern on how these women work and at the end of the day, they are abused by their husbands. Female lecturer F showed anger towards the treatment of women. She cited Maiguru as an example. She blamed Maiguru for coming back after she had left her husband. To show that she was not happy about the decision taken by Maiguru, she said if it was her, she would not have come back.

Female lecturer D took a radical stance when she said she was not going to come back. Radical feminists advocate for separatism because they view men as the source of women oppression. The liberal feminist theory which was used as a lens to view this study seeks to empower women and give them a voice to speak out about their experiences of gender oppression (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011).Therefore, the female lecturer had the freedom to articulate what she thought was right. The transactional reader response theory allows for such views and feelings. However, this study takes a liberal stance. It advocates for negotiation between men and women.

The lecturers lamented the position of women in society. They said that the best way to end the situation of women in society is to conscientise women and men. Radical feminists advocate for a conscientisation of society, concerning the oppressed group in society. This 'consciousness raising' is a fundamental strategy for this strand of feminists; for, without understanding, one lives with false consciousness and cannot adequately question the dominant oppressive culture (Otkin, 2009). The lecturers believe that these feminist authors are conscientising society through their literary texts. According to their views, if men are conscientised then it will be easier for both men and women to fight the oppressive systems in society. This is one of the concerns of liberal feminists, that men and women should come together to negotiate and appreciate one another (Abbey, 2011).

The women's condition that has been described above is not observable in these three feminist texts only but also in other feminist texts that were not included in this study. In Andreas' **The Purple Violet of Oshaantu,** women suffer whilst their husbands are busy drinking and womanising. In **The Color Purple,** Celie is just more than a servant but Mr-, her husband, does not even recognise who she is. This illustrates the oppressive nature of patriarchy and the need for conscientisation of society. Male lecturer G also echoed similar sentiments:

> *It's to do with consciousness, you have to fight and conscientise on the importance of both males and females, you do it gradually, you help to raise consciousness in both males and females, help people to understand that there is need to change the status quo.Both females and males are important and issues of equality come up. We have to do something about the status quo that favours males* (M-**L G).**

Female lecturer B supported the conscentisation of men:

Economically, Adah has everything, and she is stronger than Francis, it implies from the title that women are taken as second class citizens, in the end, the male has the voice even if the female works, Francis makes the decisions even if he does not have anything, the truth is those who are taken as second class citizens are not but because of patriarchy, the male assumes a supremacy role. Society should be conscientised on these issues; our females are in a pathetic position. What Maiguru does is wrong, she should have confronted Babamukuru. However, what Adah, Maiguru and Aissotou do in the novels is a conscientisation to the male species **(F-LB).**

The lecturers continued to register the same sentiments that conscientisation of society is very important. Male lecturer G stated that, this conscientisation should be done to both males and females. He strongly believed that, if society is conscientised, the woman's condition would change. Female lecturer B gave an example of Adah who has economic power in the home but Francis, her husband, looks at her as a second class citizen. On the Adah and Francis' issue, Marxist feminists believe that men are socialised into exploitative relationships in relation to work and they carry this socialisation over into the home and their relationship to women (Baehr, 2013).

Female lecturer B's argument was that Adah cannot be a second class citizen because she is economically stronger than Francis. She thought that Francis imposes himself on Adah just because he is a man. Marxist feminists posit that, the main reason for women's lower status in relation to men is the fact that they are generally economically dependent upon their male partner. Male power over women is consolidated by beliefs about women that, they are naturally passive, and that they have maternal instincts (Baehr, 2013).However, in this case, Adah does not rely on Francis for any material support, but Francis uses the power that was bestowed on him by society to abuse Adah. The female lecturer sympathised with women who work hard for their families and do not receive recognition at the end of the day.

The lecturers have shown that these literary texts are a conscientisation of both males and females, though most of them felt that it was conscientisation of males. They acknowledged that the condition of women in society needs attention. They seemed to suggest that both men and women should work together to improve the status of women. This is what liberal feminists advocate. This conscientisation should also include women because they have also accepted their subservient position in society.

> *It's not about conscientising men only but also women themselves because they have accepted their subservient position in society, Maiguru in **Nervous Conditions** is educated, but she lets Babamukuru take her salary without her consent. The same applies to Adah in **Second Class Citizen**, she is beaten by Francis although she is the one who is working, Ramatoulaye in **So Long A Letter** cannot move away from her matrimonial home after her husband marries a second wife, the age of her daughter. She strictly adheres to tradition. Women are also being conscientised by these feminist authors to make a move in order to free themselves from patriarchal bondage* (**M-LC**).

On the same issue of female conscientisation, male lecturer F further added that:

> *These feminist authors are also conscientising women by advocating for sisterhood. Sisterhood is a kind of consciousness call for women. They are advocating for unity in their fight for recognition, because if they are divided, they can't fight the system. It's a battle and it's going on, but it should start from within. It seems the female characters in the literary texts are silently helping each other. There is some sisterhood in these women but it is lying low, Tambu pities her mother, Maiguru and Nyasha. She seems to be saying look at what patriarchy's doing to us. So, the authors are also conscientising women and not men only* (**M-LF**).

Male lecturers C and F strongly felt that women have accepted their condition in society; therefore, they need an awakening. They felt that the feminist authors are making a call, so women should listen to this call .Male lecturer C suggested that women should have a spirit of sisterhood as is done by the female characters in the literary texts. He observed that although sisterhood is lying low in the texts but it exists. He seemed to say the authors are encouraging women to uplift each other in order to win the battle.

This conscientisation message is also evident in other feminist texts that were not used in this study. In **The Purple Hibiscus**, Eugene does not appreciate the good work that his wife Beatrice does. The wife, tired of her husband's dictatorship, poisons him with the help of the maid. Although it is illegal to kill, however, a point is made. On this matter, men are being conscientised on the effects of not appreciating women in their lives.

The bad treatment of wives by husbands has been a matter of concern in different societies. Men treat their wives badly because they think they were given divine authority to do that.

The female character in **Purple Hibiscus** does not poison her husband because she does not love him, but she sees the root of her suffering as emanating from him. So, she thinks that the best way to end her suffering is to get rid of the source, 'men.' Separatism from men (Otkin, 2011), is what this female character wants. Separatism is advocated for by radical feminists because they believe that all women's problems are caused by men. Mary Astell, one of the earliest true feminist writers, admitted reluctantly in her writings that a wife is often simply 'a man's upper servant.'

However, male lecturer F had a different view from others although in some cases, he agreed on the conscientisation of women and men, he had other reservations:

> *If men take this conscentisation seriously, these women will mistake our sympathy and turn the world upside down. We will be in trouble I tell you. I think these feminist authors have a hidden agenda, that is, to overthrow men. Why should we change the status quo? This submission of women started in the Garden of Eden and who are we to change this?* (**M-LF)**

Male lecturer F had a different view from the one that he gave in the above excerpt. The reader response theory posits that a reader can interpret the same text differently depending on the phenomenon under discussion (Tyson, 2006). A text has no single meaning, so male lecturer F had different views from the ones he gave above. Although in the above excerpt he supported the idea of conscientisation, he however thought that, if this conscientisation is taken seriously, men will lose their status in society. He seemed afraid that women will upset the existing power relations. He felt secure if women remain in their subservient positions. The male lecturer showed that he was not comfortable with these feminist authors because he thought that the feminist authors have a hidden agenda. This is what Chitando (2011) referred to when she said men feel that such literature is dangerous to society. This is what seems to be manifesting in male lecturer F. To him, the hidden agenda seems to be of women taking over from men. He argued that the submission of women started in the Garden of Eden and the condition of women in society cannot be changed. To him, women's subservient position in society is God ordained and the male lecturer has also been acculturated into this mind set.

The theme of conscentisation that runs throughout the literary texts is an awakening to society.

It is evident in the above discussion that both educated and uneducated women suffer at the hands of men. The theme of education as a tool to liberate women was discussed. Listen to what participants said about education in the following section.

5.2.2 Education as a tool to emancipate women

According to participants education can be used by women to empower themselves economically. Some argued that the reason why most women suffer is because they are not educated. Others believed that an educated woman does not suffer like an uneducated woman. There were arguments that women can still be oppressed no matter how educated they are but others argued that, an educated woman is better positioned than an uneducated one. However, the patriarchal nature of the Zimbabwean society expects a woman to behave like a 'woman' no matter how educated she is.

Most lecturers presented education as one of the ways in which women can lift themselves from the bog of tradition. They gave examples of educated women in the literary texts who liberate themselves through education. Some of them are denied access to education but at the end, are fortunate to get educated. One example given was Tambu in **Nervous Conditions**. Her parents decide to send her brother Nhamo to school because he is a boy, denying Tambu, a girl, the privilege to fulfill her educational ambition. As a girl, she is supposed to learn to cook for her future husband. This is what her father said when she insisted that she wanted to go to school;

Can you cook books and feed them to your husband? Stay at home with your mother.
Learn to cook and clean. Grow vegetables (**Dangarembga, p.15**).

On this issue, Brickhill (1996), in his study found that the mother is the housewife and supporter of the father. No other roles are ever acknowledged. Tambu's role was to become a good wife and nothing else. Her father is an epitome of traditional practice that places women within the confinements of her matrimonial home and nothing beyond that. To Tambu, marriage is not the first option in her life. She needs education. Egejuru and Katrak (1997) commented that Tambu is denied the opportunity of early education because the family resources must be devoted to

educating her brother. Only her brother's death opens for her a door that would otherwise have remained closed. This shows the second class status that is accorded the girl-child by society. It is only after Nhamo's death that Tambu becomes the last choice because there was no other male child who could replace Nhamo. What Tsitsi Dangarembga portrayed about the situation of the girl-child is true. One male lecturer confirmed that Dangarembga's story is true because he said he knew the family that she portrayed in her novel.

Another example is Adah in *Second Class Citizen* whose parents were disappointed by her birth because they expected a boy instead of a girl. Thus her birth was never recognised and her education was never considered. *"When she was eight, there was still a debate on whether it would be wise to send her to school" (*Emecheta, p.9)*.

 Literature reviewed showed that in Zimbabwe the education of girls was not very important. Kwinjeh (2007) explains that Zimbabwean girls were educated for domesticity whilst boys were channelled for employment in the public sphere. The number of female students at the only university, which was in Zimbabwe at independence, has always been very low (Kwinjeh, 2007). This was not because women were less intelligent than men but was a result of the patriarchal nature of the Zimbabwean society which glorified male dominance and kept women subordinated (Moyana, 2006). Although the education of the girl-child is now considered important in Zimbabwe, the lecturers felt that, there is need to respect the educated women in society. On the issue of education, they felt that society is too harsh on women. They cited an example of Adah, in *Second Class Citizen,* whose birth was a disappointment to her parents, to the immediate family and to her tribe. Nobody thought of recording her birth because everyone in the family was expecting a boy. Thus the boy's education is put ahead of Adah's. At the age of eight, they were still discussing whether it was wise to send her to school or not. The lecturers observed that this is indicative of the unsympathetic situation many African women and girls find themselves in. They also observed that through education, these women can liberate themselves. However, they felt that because of patriarchy, educated women find themselves entrapped. They gave an example of Ramatoulaye who is entrapped in tradition despite her education. Ramatoulaye in *So Long A Letter* confesses:

I am one of those who can realise themselves fully and bloom only when they form part of a couple. Even though I understand your stand, I respect the choice of liberated women. I have never conceived of happiness outside marriage (Bâ**, p.56).**

Although educated, Ramatoulaye still believes it is necessary to suffer in marriage than to leave her matrimonial home. To her, what matters most is her marriage and not her education. However, she is better positioned   because she can support herself and children because she has a profession. Although she is in an abusive marriage, Ramatoulaye's education helps her to live a better life than the uneducated Mai Tambu in *Nervous Conditions*.

 The participants also gave examples of female characters like Tambu in *Nervous Conditions* and Adah in *Second Class Citizen* that defy societal values, norms and beliefs to get the education that is very important to them. The girls have discovered that education is the only tool that can empower them; so, they fight until they get the education that can emancipate them from the bondage of traditional practices. They wish to help their 'kind' once they are educated and get employment. Through their mothers, they discover that their sex is inferior and both are determined to get the education they yearn for.

Male lecturer A had this to say:

> *The feminist authors are saying women are just as good as men and education makes them even better. Bamukuru spoils the extended family because Maiguru is educated. Women's education is important; Maiguru contributes a lot though Babamukuru does not appreciate what she does. There are educated women who bring food to the table in society. Adah in **Second class citizen** sends her husband to school, and fends for the family. She is able to do that because she is educated. Ramatoulaye in **So Long A Letter** looks after the children because she has a job and she is educated .Aissotou is able to buy a car for her friend because she is educated. The woman's education   is very important.*

Male lecturer A supported the idea that the education of women is very important in families. He observed that the male characters in the literary texts enjoy the privileges of their positions as men because their wives are educated and contribute economically to the development of their families. All the male characters he cited above are in better positions in society because their wives are educated and can help in the caring of the families. As he has

observed, some of these men spend their money on other women because they know that their educated wives are capable of taking care of their families.

It seems therefore that, when women are educated, they use their education to develop others. Aissotou buys a car for her friend and Adah goes to the extent of sending her husband to school. Although Francis fails all his examinations, his wife is eager to educate her husband. This therefore means that from the male lecturer's observation, a woman's education should be seriously considered.

> *Yes, societies are changing because of these feminist ideologies. Education programmes are creeping into African societies. The way women were treated by their husbands, is different now, it has to do with education of the new generation. Educating women today is very important because they will impart onto their children these important values, this can be powerful in trying to change the negative attitudes that the society has towards women. Aissotou in* **So Long A Letter** *is educated and when her marriage does not work, she moves out of her matrimonial home. She can look after herself and children because she is educated and has a good job, so does Adah in* **Second Class Citizen** *(*M-LI).

Male lecturer I acknowledged that through education, women can take care of themselves without depending on men. The example of Adah and Aissotou he cited above is a testimony that he believes in the power of education in liberating women from abusive relationships. He also believes that the education programmes which are creeping into society will go a long way in helping women realise their full potential. He acknowledged that educated women today are liberated because they take full responsibility of their salaries unlike women in the literary texts. He seemed to say most men now appreciate that women should take full responsibility of their salaries. He thought this new perspective had to do with the new generation of feminism.

However, some women participants confessed that no matter how educated they might be and helpful in society, some men still do not believe in a woman's education. This is contrary to what male lecturer M said above. The reason for the difference might be the perspectives of individual males.

This is what Male lecturer J said about a woman's education:

> *If you educate a girl, you do it for the benefit of the other family where she is going to marry. I think Jeremiah and Babamukuru were right to send Nhamo (boy) to school instead of Tambudzai (girl).* However, *things have changed now because of feminist activism, and the girl child should be educated as well*.

Male lecturer J does not to support the education of the girl-child because he supported Tambu's father's decision to send Nhamo to school instead of Tambu although Tambu is more intelligent than her brother. His reason for supporting this is because he believes that if one educates a girl, it is done for the benefit of the family where the girl is going to marry into. The lecturer seemed to be indirectly saying if you educate a girl-child you will be wasting resources. However, he acknowledged that with feminist activism, there was need to educate the girl-child. This indicates that, if it was not for the advent of feminism, the girl-child would not have been given the opportunity to go to school. In Zimbabwe, women agent pressure groups have made the situation of women and girls better than before. (Their roles were discussed in chapter one of this thesis). Male lecturer J has shown that feminism has influenced him somehow, because to him the education of the girl child is not important.

This shows how some males still view the education of women as unimportant. Thus Bâ (1980, p.6) reaffirms "*When will education be decided for children on the basis not of sex but of talent?*" Bâ laments the situation of the girl-child in society. In different families, resources are channelled to the boy-child's education. Although in the literary texts under study, the education of the girl-child has proved not to be important, the girls have shown that once they are educated, they help to develop others.

Male lecturer A agreed with what Dangarembga wrote about the education situation of the girl-child. He said it is a true story:

> *This is a true story, I actually know the family,* (referring to the characters in **Nervous Conditions**) *the characters are real, and this is reflective of the society that we belong to. She has articulated the real problems that happened during those times. Hoewver, the situation has changed now, girls are being sent to school, except in places which are still very backward and still cling to the old beliefs that sending a girl child is wasting resources but these places are very few, otherwise the Zimbabwean society is now conscious that if you educate a man, you educate an individual but if you educate a woman, you educate a society*.

Male lecturer A supported Dangarembga on the situation of the girl-child's education during the period that Dangarembga wrote her story. He confirmed male lecturer J's belief that sending a girl-child to school is a wastage of resources. However, male lecturer A said, it was an old belief. The society is now aware of the importance of educating the girl-child. Most lecturers condemned males who are perpetuators of patriarchy. Tambu's situation was given as a reference point. Nhamo as young as he is, already has been influenced by patriarchy. Nhamo talks to Tambu rudely in support of the family's decision to send him to school instead of Tambu. This is what Nhamo said to Tambu, *"Why are you jealous anyway? Did you even hear of a girl being taken away to school?"*(Bâ, p.16).Chitando(2011) in her study, found that the socialisation process in the family which instils patriarchal practices into the young does not end within the family but infiltrates into the other social institutions like marriage, religion, education, politics and the economy. Nhamo is socialised into looking at women as being inferior to men.

Tambu does not listen to Nhamo's rude words because she is determined to go to school; she decides to grow maize and sell it so that she can raise her own fees. She knew that education was the only weapon that was going to set herself, her mother and sisters free from the patriarchal oppressive system. As a result, when Nhamo stole her maize cobs, she had to fight him. A female lecturer had this to say on Tambu's ambition of going to school and fighting against Nhamo:

> *Tambu is justified to fight Nhamo; she had worked very hard to raise her fees, because Nhamo is depriving her of the opportunity to go to school. She does not fight for the sake of fighting; she fought for a purpose because she knew that education was a tool that was going to emancipate her from male dominance. Nhamo listens to his father telling Tambu that she cannot feed books to her husband and he also believes that a girl-child should not be educated, When Tambu fights Nhamo, she fights patriarchy, because Nhamo, like Babamukuru and Jeremiah epitomise patriarchy (**F-LD**).*

Female lecturer H further elaborated on the unfair treatment that was accorded women in the texts:

> *Adah in **Second Class Citizen** had to fight for recognition in the society she was born until she got the education that she wanted. It is through her assertiveness that she finally achieved her ambition. At eight, she still had no birth certificate because when*

she was born, nobody bothered about her just because she was a girl, her birth brought disappointment. They never considered her for education; it's an unfair system.

Female lecturers H and D sympathised with the girl-child's condition in society. Tambu has to work hard to fulfil her ambitions to get educated but to Nhamo, it is automatic because he is a boy. The same applies to Adah; she also has to fight to get the education that she so much wants. The female lecturers sympathised with the girls that is why they support Tambu's fight with Nhamo. On the issue of unfairness on the treatment of girls and boys in relation to Tambu and Nhamo' situation, liberal feminist theorists advocate for fairness in the treatment of men and women by society. They posit that; "first, to make sure the rules of the game are fair, and second, to make certain that none of the runners in the race for society's goods and services is systematically disadvantaged" (Tong, 2009, p. 2). The critical and feminist paradigms also advocate for equality in all spheres of life. Girls in the texts are disadvantaged in as far as education is concerned. There should be equal distribution of society's goods and service despite one's gender.

However, Female Lecturer F showed how education at times might not help women:

The feminist writer is talking about the traditionally uneducated and educated woman. To show how patriarchy can impact on an educated woman, Dangarembga presents Maiguru who is educated but suffer in matrimony just like the uneducated Mai Tambu, Jeremiah's wife. Maiguru is entrapped; she goes to a brother for protection but comes back to her oppressive husband. With her master's degree, she suffers in the hands of patriarchy, and her education does not give her freedom. Although she is as educated as her husband, she has no say in the decisions of the family. Many educated women today in Zimbabwe and beyond suffer in the hands of patriarchy. Something must be done.

She further explained that:

Maiguru though educated, she has no say, she has to be humble if she does not humble herself, and maybe their marriage was going to break. As educated as she is, we see her being forced to take part in all the house hold chores at the homestead. Education here does not liberate Maiguru in choosing what she wants to do. She is deprived of her freedom. To make matters worse, she has no control over her

salary. Even in our society today, people do not value a woman's education much, they are worried about one being a   good daughter-in-law, working for the in-law **(F-LF).**

Most lecturers registered sentiments on the unfair treatment of women in the literary texts, in Africa and Zimbabwe in particular. They blamed patriarchy for the suffering of women in the literary texts and the societies they come from. Kambarami (2006) for example, argues that patriarchal practices within the Zimbabwean Shona culture perpetuate gender inequality and strip women of who they are because custom in Africa is stronger than domination, law and religion. The feminist theory affirms women's equality with men and rejects patriarchy (Hannam, 2007).

Most lecturers believe that the unfair treatment of women in society can be changed, echoing Simone de Beauvoir's sentiments that 'a woman is not born but made'(Beauvoir,1990).They argued that it is society that gives meaning to women and for that reason there is need to change the status quo. The lecturers registered sentiments that women should defy all odds and climb the social ladder. They gave an example of Adah, who, despite the fact that she was denied access to education, forced her way to school without the consent of her parents. In the literary text, the author writes:

She got tired of running, and started to trot like a lame horse, tired of trotting, she walked. She was soon at the school rooms (Bâ**, p.20).**

This highlights the fact that Adah fought against all odds to go to school. With determination, she did, contrary to the expectations of the society where the boy child was the only one to be educated. The fact that Adah was running to school shows how desperate she was for education. She ran because she did not want anyone to stop her from going to school. She at last reached school and she said to Mr Cole, the school principal "*I came to school... My parents would not send me*!"**(Emecheta, p.11**). This shows that Adah's society did not believe in sending a girl-child to school, hence she goes there on her own. She is determined to fulfil her ambition despite her being looked down upon by her family and society. Radical feminists believe in this determinism that is shown by Adah. They believe that women need to stand up and fight patriarchy that is what Tambu and Adah do in the literary texts. In the end, they succeed. Their worry is not about marriage but education. Adah in ***Second Class Citizen*** and Aissotou in ***So Long A Letter*** leave their husbands because they are being

abused. Equipped with education, they are economically independent and are not dependent on men.

Female lecturer D however, expressed the feeling that education alone does not make a woman complete; she needs a man by her side:

> *There is need to be with a man, I do agree with the liberal feminists and not the radicals. I think education is not enough but there is need for support from men. A man's presence is necessary for a woman. Usually, if a woman does not have a man beside her, she feels empty* (**F-LD**).

She further explained, contradicting herself in the process:

> *While the authors liberate their female characters through education but you will find them relying on men and this gives them weak characters. We want to run away from this bondage but we can't. Some female characters have financial stamina but they can't control their incomes. These women work very hard but they are so much into patriarchy and can't pull themselves from patriarchal bondage. Culture and patriarchy will continue to harm women; but the women themselves are strong and can fend for their families. They pretend to be liberated but then go back to men. Maiguru in* **Nervous Conditions** *runs away but with her master's degree, she comes back to her husband because she cannot run away from tradition. Education can sometimes make women look stupid* (**F-LD**).

The female lecturer showed that she had mixed feelings towards women's education. The reader response theory explains that a reader can have different interpretations of the same text depending on the emotional condition of the reader at that time. This female lecturer was very emotional, that is why she used the word 'stupid' here. The reader response theory allows for any interpretation because a text can have different interpretations, hence the need to take into consideration what the female lecturer said on this issue of women's education.

The female lecturer showed that education alone does not make a woman complete. Female lecturer D has the view that if a woman is educated and does not have a man by her side, life for that woman will be void. The female lecturer said she agrees with liberal feminists' views that men and women need each other in life. She said she does not agree with the radical feminists' stance that advocates for a total separation from men. Therefore, she supported the idea that women need men in their lives no matter how educated they are. The lecturer even

used the word 'stupid' to show that education does not make a woman complete. She gave an example of Maiguru who has a master's degree who, after deciding to run away, comes back to her husband. According to the female lecturer, education becomes useless if a woman is not married.

Female lecturer D's argument on marriage and education is echoed by Ramatoulaye in *So Long A Letter,* who tells her childhood friend that although she is educated and can look after herself well, she does not find happiness outside marriage implying that she could not imagine a life without a man. She says; *I am one of those who can realise themselves fully and bloom only when they form part of a couple … I have never conceived of happiness outside marriage* **(Bâ, p.56).**

Female lecturer A's argument is further manifested in Aunty Nabou in *So Long A Letter*, who expresses distaste for women's education. This is how Aunty Nabou feels about a woman's education:

To tell the truth, a woman does not need too much education. In fact, I wonder how a woman can earn her living talking from morning to night...The first quality of a woman is her docility **(Bâ, pp.29-30)**.

According to Aunty Nabou, a woman should show respect to men, which is the first quality she should possess among other things. She also supports the view that a woman should not be educated. She indirectly seems to suggest that a woman should be married and become docile to her husband just like Maiguru in *Nervous Conditions.*

This therefore means that women's emancipation is an uphill struggle. From the above quotation, it shows that women themselves are not aware of how much they are oppressed in society and that education can be the only tool that can emancipate them. The likes of Aunty Nabou encourages women to be docile thereby letting men oppress and exploit them in the name of tradition. When she talks about a woman spending the whole day talking, she is referring to women who are teachers by profession. According to her, education does not befit a woman. Like what the other lecturers have observed, women are also entrapped by tradition, so is Aunty Nabou. The lecturers in earlier discussions indicated that there is need for women and men to be re-educated and re-socialised, a re-socialisation which is what liberal feminists are advocating. Men and women can change the status quo.

This is what male lecturer J said about a re-education and the education of the girl-child:

If all people are educated they become aware of the evil practices of the society and change the behaviour of confining themselves to traditional practices. And once people are enlightened, they will change their behaviours for the betterment of their families. People like Jeremiah need a re-education. They should be educated so that they know the importance of educating the girl-child. He thinks Tambu was born for marriage, it was proper for Jeremiah to send Tambu to school because she would be an educated woman rather than subjecting her to her mother's situation. Tambu yearned for education so much because she has discovered that marriage is an institution that trains women to suffer silently. Through her education, she wanted to help her mother out of poverty and oppression **(M-LJ).**

Male lecturer J asserted that Tambu's quest for education was not to fulfil her selfish ambitions, but she has seen the suffering of her mother and sisters at the hands of patriarchy. He believed that she wants to help them out of poverty and oppression. Her mother looks far older than her age because of the family burdens. So, through education, Tambu wishes to help her family. Therefore, most lecturers believed that the female characters in the novels do not use their education for selfish ambitions but to help other women. For example, Aissotou buys a car for her friend because her education has made her to become economically independent.

In *So Long A Letter,* the female characters defy societal norms as they climb the educational ladder. The lecturers gave an example of Ramatoulaye who accepts the plight of her pregnant daughter, instead of sending her away to her prospective husband as tradition demands; she encourages her to go on with her education, overriding all taboos. They also showed how Ramatoulaye devised a strategy to keep her daughter at school. The lecturers explained that, the reason for Ramatoulaye to do that is because she knows that equipped with education, her daughter would be able to look after her unborn child. She is ready to face the consequences of her decisions. Feminist literary texts portray female characters who are ready to suffer the consequences of their decisions (Moyana, 2006).This is what Ramatoulaye does because she knows that education will economically empower her girl-child. Ramatoulaye confesses this to her friend:

You had the surprising courage to take your life into your own hands...books saved you. Having become your refuge, they sustained you. The power of books **(Bâ, p.32).**

By showing Ramatoulaye's assertiveness in her quest to let her child continue with her education, Snodgrass (2014) explains that women in literature do not really accept the traditional role of women as decided by society. They are ready to make their own decision, to express this choice of personal decision making and are ready to deal with consequences of these choices, actions and decisions. They want to change the status quo and the only way to do it, is to show their assertiveness. By so doing, change becomes inevitable. This is in agreement with the liberal feminist thoughts. Remaining docile and submissive does not help Ramatoulaye's situation, she had to break tradition to set her free from the bond of tradition.

According to De Beauvoir, a woman must break the bonds of patriarchal society and define herself if she wishes to become a significant human being in her own right and to defy male classification as the 'Other'(Beauvoir,1990).This is what Ramatoulaye in **So Long A Letter** does as well as other female characters in other literary texts. Feminists believe that there is need for society to see the importance of educating women because it empowers them in all aspects of life.

In the literature reviewed, Chitando (2011) explains that patriarchal attitudes view educating girls as a waste of money since they will marry out and benefit other families. This was presented by male lecturer **J** above. In the feminist literary texts under study, the education of the girl-child is not given due attention because the parents think it is a waste of resources since she will marry and benefit her in-laws. Tambu in **Nervous Conditions** was told by her father that she was not going to cook books for her husband. The feminist literary texts contest this ideology. Deep down in her heart Tambu needed education to emancipate her mother and sisters from poverty and women oppression. Education has been shown by participants as a tool which women can use to liberate themselves from male-domination as has been shown by the feminist writers through their female characters.

However, some few lecturers showed that it might not be true that education can be used as a tool by women to liberate them in a patriarchal society like Zimbabwe. Many educated women in Zimbabwe, like Maiguru in **Nervous Conditions** and Adah in **Second Class Citizen,** suffer though they are educated. Whether educated or not, a woman should play a subservient role in society, be it at church, family or societal level. In reviewed related literature, Chirimuuta (2006) argues that this is due to the fact that even those women who are educated have to succumb to culture, otherwise they get labeled as 'Unmarriageable' and will be shunned by society. These educated women find themselves in difficult situations;

they are entrapped in tradition as is the case with Maiguru in *Nervous Conditions*, Adah in *Second Class Citizen* and Ramatoulaye in *So Long A Letter*, who all suffer in their marriages. However, Adah defies societal norms, values and beliefs and walk out of her matrimonial home just like Aissotou in *So Long A Letter.* In *She No Longer Weeps* (a text outside those under study), Martha refuses to marry because she does not believe in being made a sex object by men. With her education she is able to take care of her material needs.

Many educated women in Zimbabwe find themselves in the same situation as has been shown by participants. The situation of Maiguru in *Nervous Conditions* shows that modern education by itself is no assurance against patriarchal domination. Therefore, educated women endure in their abusive marriages and society expects them to do so. Perhaps through reading this feminist literature, the society will understand who they are. It should start with lecturers and students who are directly involved in this type of literature and then to different societies in Africa and beyond. The lecturers, both male and female registered concerns that women should defy all odds by educating themselves and climbing the social ladder to come out of the bog of oppression and dependence on men.

Women oppression also came out as a theme during data elicitation.

5.2.3 Women's oppression

Women's oppression was viewed by most lecturer participants (both male and female) as one of the ugliest forms of patriarchy. They agreed that women are unnecessarily oppressed. Some male lecturers did not deny the fact that they were also part and parcel of that oppressive system because of their patriarchal backgrounds. They said most decisions they make in life are deeply rooted in patriarchy.

> *The oppression of women has its origin in the bible, so men enjoy divine authority in oppressing women. We are a product of an oppressive society; we just inherited what has been there since time immemorial. But I am not saying it's good but it's that we are also helpless, so we need to work together (****M-LG****).*

Male lecturer **G** asserted that the oppression of women started in the Garden of Eden. Therefore, when men oppress women, they do so with divine authority without feeling guilty at all. The other issue he referred to was that, men are products of an oppressive society, so there is nothing they can do about the situation because nobody knows how long this

oppression of women had been there. The lecturer showed that even if they do not want to oppress women, there is nothing they can do because they inherited a system that was there before they were born. He, however, felt that there was need for both women and men to work together to stop the oppression of women. In other words, the lecturer blamed the socialisation process they went through because during the socialisation process, that is when boys and girls are taught who they are and who they should be in society. Therefore, the lecturer seemed to be saying we do what society expects us to do. This is supported from the literature reviewed in which Nyanhongo (2011) asserts that the socialisation the girl-child receives from birth makes her a victim of oppression in a society that is dominated by men. He further explains that these oppressive aspects of tradition still exist in contemporary societies. Women continue to be oppressed in other areas of domestic life. Heavy expectations continue to be placed on many African women. For example, they still may be required to carry out household chores and satisfy their men's physical needs and complement this by bearing male children. In another feminist text, outside this study, *The Joys of Motherhood,* Nnu Ego suffers the burden of bearing children and taking care of them and endures sexual abuse at the hands of her husband who has an insatiable appetite for women.

It occurred to Nnu Ego that she was a prisoner, imprisoned by her love for her children, imprisoned by her role as the senior wife **(Emecheta, p.137).**

Mai Tambu in *Nervous Conditions* suffers in marriage because of the oppressive nature of African society. She works very hard for the family while Jeremiah, her husband drinks and womanises. She has a burden of looking after the family as well as bearing children. She accepts her condition as an African woman. She confesses that it is a burden to be a woman;

This business of womanhood is a heavy burden, how could it not be? Aren't we the ones who bear children...when there are sacrifices to be made, you are the one who has to make them...and these things are not easy...learn to carry your burdens with strength **(Dangarembga,p.16).**

In *So Long A Letter,* Ramatoulaye is burdened with taking care of the family while her husband is busy chasing girls of her daughter's age. Ramatoulaye is a teacher and her salary is inadequate to meet all the family demands, so she suffers trying to make ends meet. As an African woman, she has to shoulder all these burdens; she cannot reprimand her husband because tradition does not allow her to do so. She has to operate under this African

oppressive system. In *Second Class Citizen,* Adah is like the other two women; she is the one who brings food to the table. She suffers the burden of sending Francis, her husband to school, as well as providing for her children and her in-laws. Francis beats her, despite the fact that she is his provider; he takes her money and indulges in drinking. At school, he is a failure, he fails all the courses, and he cannot match Adah intellectually. He does not care, he abuses her. Adah is helpless, there is nothing she can do but to suffer under this oppressive system where she has to be submissive to her husband. Tradition is portrayed as a blight that prevents women from attaining full personal development and social power. All women complain in one way or another against this blight. Female lecturer B had this to say:

> *Economically, Adah has everything, and she is stronger than Francis. It implies from the title that those who take the second class citizen status are females. In the end, the male has the voice even if the female is the bread winner. Francis makes the decisions with Adah's salary even if he does not have anything, the truth is those who are taken as second class citizens, are not, we are not looking at theory but practice here. But because of patriarchy, the male assumes a supremacy role. The women are oppressed, right, left and centre.*

Female lecturer B bemoans the oppressive system women operate under. She expressed that women make a lot of sacrifices for their families but at the end of the day, they are not appreciated for the good work. The men in their lives make life hard to bear. She referred to Adah's situation; Francis takes Adah's salary and does what he wants with it. Adah cannot do anything just because she is a woman. Female lecturer B gave Francis a second class citizenship because he is the one who does not have anything. According to the lecturer's observation, it is only theoretical that we say women are second class citizens. In this case, she said it is Francis who is a second class citizen. Women are looked at as second class citizens with nothing more important to think about, except to take care of the medieval household chores like cleaning, cooking and sewing. Although women are rising in today's society, many are still being physically and emotionally abused by men. She said Francis acquires a superior position because patriarchy gives him supremacy over the woman. The female lecturer sounded bitter on the issue of male supremacy because she has observed that women are oppressed, 'left, right and centre.'

The other view that came up was that of Maiguru in *Nervous Conditions,* who has no say over her salary. When family decisions are made, Maiguru is not consulted although she

contributes financially to its upkeep. Babamukuru would rather consult Jeremiah and Takesure, the male figures in the family than consulting Maiguru. She is not allowed to say anything concerning family matters but she is also a bread winner. Everything is decided for her by her husband. The family matters are discussed at the *dare* (In Zimbabwe, it's a place where family matters are solved by males, women are not allowed there).She continued to explain that:

> *Dangarembga is expressing the cry of any woman in society, family issues are resolved at the dare and women are not invited at all. I do sympathise with Tambu when she says their views were not considered as women. Decisions are made for them. In our African society, women are not heard but are seen. This is exactly what happens in many African families. Opinions are sought but decisions are made by men. This shows that women are working under oppressive conditions and this is pathetic. Something must be done* **(F-LB).**

Female lecturer B sympathised with women. She sympathised with Tambu in ***Nervous Conditions,*** who laments that they were never listened to because they are women. Tambu's concern is supported by Egejuru and Katrak (1997, p. 115) who comment that "…in which there was no validity in what women thought and said." Egejuru and Katrak are referring to Ncgobo's description of South African women during apartheid. Their voices were never listened to. Female lecturer B thought that all African women suffer under these oppressive patriarchal systems. She observed that opinions are sought from women but at the end of the day, it is the man who makes the final decision. This takes us back to Tambu's sympathetic situation. The lecturer expressed that women in Africa are oppressed and in most African families, decisions are made by men thereby making women passive recipients.

However, she felt that something must be done to change the woman's condition. This is in support of feminism's central view that women's condition is socially constructed and therefore, open to change (Hannam, 2007).Therefore, the condition of women in society is not permanent. Most lecturers felt that there is need to fight patriarchy and they felt the struggle has begun with these feminist literary texts. They believe that the feminist ideologies that are observable in these texts will help society to see the extent to which women are oppressed. During the interviews, the lecturers showed that these texts will help in the sense that, their students as teachers, will carry the message to the students they teach and together, women and men can change the oppressive condition of women in society.

Male lecturer C echoed these sentiments when he said he had grown in these oppressive systems and had seen women suffering and not being consulted in any decision making on family matters, yet, they are the ones who carry family burdens. He had this to say:

> *I grew up in these oppressive times and I understand when people talk about women oppression. I feel pity for Tambudzai and her mother, Adah and Maiguru. Reading the works from these feminist writers has affected me somehow though I belong to the old school. These texts should be taught in schools and universities. Women have suffered for a long time. They have suffered from oppression for a long time and these texts balance issues between men and women* **(M-LC).**

He further added that:

> *It's the authors' backgrounds that have influenced them to come up with these ideas. The African society is largely patriarchal and women live under repressive environments, so, through their literature, the world will know and change for the better. The way they portray their female characters and even the themes they explore is a reflection of society, they grew up in those repressive backgrounds, and this is what has prompted them to write this.*

The lecturer acknowledged that he was aware that women are oppressed because he was part and parcel of the oppressive system. He sympathised with women because as a product of the oppressive system, he knows what it does to women.

On this oppressive issue of women, Nyanhongo (2011) in her analysis of *Nervous Conditions* found that women operate under an oppressive patriarchal system. Kristina Rungano, a Zimbabwean woman poet writes about how African women suffer. In her collection of *A Storm is Brewing*, she says a woman always suffers at the hands of her abusive husband. She does everything for her promiscuous man who comes demanding sex although he also has been tending to matters of the flesh outside. The pregnant woman suffers beatings. This kind of treatment makes her feel weary, tired, used and full of hate and yet tradition says she should obey her 'Lord.' This is what female lecturer D said:

> *Even if the husband does something bad, you are not allowed to reprimand the husband, the woman is taught to listen to the husband and the man has to rule their*

households with a stern hand. For a woman to keep her marriage, she has to be docile.

Nyanhongo quoted one of the female characters in *Nervous Conditions*, Mai Tambudzai, who laments the oppressive condition of women:

When there are sacrifices to be made, you are the one who has to make them. And these things are not easy (**Dangarembga, p. 16**).

The African woman of the rural areas is portrayed as little more than a slave who goes about her task with silent acceptance. She has no past and no future, given the inherent backwardness of her society. Her consciousness about her oppression is awakened only when she comes into contact with enlightened women. In the literature reviewed, Nyanhongo (2011) laments that many African women suffer because of gender oppression alongside race and class. She adds that these forms of subjugation can relate to one another in different ways. She gives examples of some women who may be oppressed on the grounds of their gender and race and others as a result of their gender and class. Meanwhile, for some women such as Mai Tambu in *Nervous Conditions,* gender, racial and class oppression go hand-in-glove. As her words suggest, these forms of suffering are significantly generated and sustained by oppressive aspects of traditional norms and practices with colonisation only playing a minor role. This is evident not only in African societies but also in feminist African literature which reflects these features of these societies. They also showed that boys are socialised at a tender age to oppress women just like what Nhamo in *Nervous Conditions* does to his sisters. Female lecturer I was very emotional on this issue as she had this to say:

Yes, it's true, the boy is socialised into ruling the woman, so it's from childhood up to adulthood, and even at school and even to university and then back as an adult in society, the boy child will start oppressing the woman, its cyclic in nature, patriarchy plays an important role in the socialisation of both men and women. Nhamo in **Nervous Conditions** *tells Tambu that she was not going to school because it is like that everywhere. He would leave his bags at the bus stop for his sisters to come and pick them up even if he has nothing to carry. Women have also accepted their submissive roles in society. The mother will always say to her children, I will report you to your father*.

She continued lamenting:

> *Some of these values are oppressive, and women should stand up for their rights, it's not defying societal norms. Culture is dynamic, there is need for change, the society has to change, but it is slow but one day these men will realise. Workshops should be held and these issues be discussed in public. And to show how women are capable of doing what men can do, and if women are given the chance to showcase themselves without prejudice, then definitely, this world will be different and people will live in harmony* **(F-LI).**

She concluded angrily (frowning to show the extent to which how emotional she was about the phenomenon under discussion).

Through her, I discovered that the subject I was exploring really affected individuals in different ways. At a certain point, she emphasised that I should write verbatim all she said because she wanted men to know the problems they were causing to the woman folk. She condemned all the male characters in the three literary texts as well as other feminist literary texts that were not included in this study.

What was surprising was that at times, she would talk about preserving our culture. One incident she referred to was when Nyasha in *Nervous Conditions* fought back her father. She said we are Africans and because of that, we need to keep our culture. Although she showed that she was radical, on this issue, she was very conservative, especially when she talked about preserving the African culture. The transactional reader response theory explains that individuals bring in their emotions as they interact with the texts. It is not surprising that female lecturer **I** seemed to be contradicting herself. According to the reader response theory, a reader reacts to a text at different stages depending on the phenomenon under discussion. The female lecturer grew up in patriarchal Zimbabwe where there is need to preserve culture; that is why on this issue, castigated Nyasha for fighting back her father which is not acceptable in the Zimbabwean Shona culture.

In support of the above views, male lecturer E said the literary texts are an eye opener to both males and females. The purpose of feminist authors presenting women who suffer oppression at the hands of men, is to tell society that it is high time women were appreciated. The lecturer gave examples of Adah in *So Long A Letter* and Mai Tambu in *Nervous Conditions.*

These women suffer in trying to sustain their families whilst their husbands are busy with other things. These texts will go a long way in educating society on the condition of women:

> *The literary texts enlighten students on the oppression of women in society. They are very educative, generally, people do not know that they are oppressed, women should know that they are oppressed, and entrapped and this knowledge helps them in future not to let people oppress them because they are female. These texts are an eye opener to both males and females. They are inspiring texts to the young generation of women; they will learn not to let people coerce them into cultural practices in this modern era, why, what for? (* **M-LE).**

Lecturer E has the belief that these texts will inspire the young generation of women. He encouraged the young generation not to let society force them into cultural practices that oppress them. He seemed to be advocating for women emancipation.

On the issue of women oppression, Rosemarie Tong, a renowned feminist posits that the liberal feminist theory attempts to describe women's oppression, to explain its causes and consequences and to prescribe strategies for women's liberation. Flax, another renowned feminist, posits that the feminist theory looks at how to overcome this oppression. On the issue of overcoming oppression, the lecturers suggested that the only way to overcome oppression is co-operation between the two sexes; together women and men can fight and stop the oppression of women. This is what the liberal feminists advocate. They advocate for co-operation between the two sexes. That is what was being advocated by lecturer participants in this study. Jean Grimshaw, a feminist, in her essay ***Philosophy and Feminist Thinking,*** argues that, for any viewpoint to count as feminist, it must believe that women have been oppressed and unjustly treated and that something needs to be done about this. The lecturers' views showed that women have been treated unfairly and patriarchy should be put to an end in order to end women oppression. This can only be achieved if together women and men unite.

The theme of marriage also emanated from the interviews.

5.2.4 Marriage as an institution to oppress women

The radical and Marxist feminist theories posit that marriage is an institution that oppresses women. Mary Astell, one of the earliest true feminists wrote a book entitled, **Some reflections upon marriage** (1700*)* where she explores the problems of married women. She asks: 'What poor woman is ever taught that she should have a higher desire than to get her a husband?' She admitted rather reluctantly that marriage is necessary to propagate the species, but insisted that a wife is all too often simply 'a man's upper servant.' Any woman who 'does not practise passive obedience to the utmost will never be acceptable to such an absolute Sovereign as a husband,' she warned. She had sketched her own ideal place in her first book, a secular convent, where women could live together; retire from the world, in happy studious innocence, 'such as paradise' which was forfeited by mother Eve. Adam would have no place in this Eden (Wallace, 2005). Radical feminists echo Mary Astell's sentiments about marriage; they say the earth will be the best place to live if men are extinguished. They believe that men are the sources of women's unhappiness and marriage is an institution that oppresses women. However, this study takes a liberal stance and advocates for negotiation between men and women.

Some female and male lecturers displayed a dislike of what women go through in their marriages. They gave examples of female characters who suffered in their marriages in the literary texts. Adah in **Second Class Citizen** is in an abusive marriage, no matter how much she contributes to the family. Francis, her husband beats her and uses her salary as he wishes. Maiguru in **Nervous Conditions** suffers silently. At one time, she runs away but unfortunately she comes back because she wants to conform to traditional practices. In **So Long A Letter,** Ramatoulaye suffers with the burden of looking after her children. Aissotou in **So Long A Letter,** after suffering, decides to move out of the abusive marriage and so does Adah in **Second Class Citizen**. In other feminist literary texts, women are abused and suffer. In **Purple Hibiscus** by Chimamanda, Beatrice is beaten by her husband until she has a miscarriage. In **The Color Purple** by Alice Walker, Celie is sexually harassed and treated like a slave and in **The Joys of Motherhood** *by* Emecheta Nnu Ego suffers sexual abuse from her husband who has an insatiable appetite for women. Feminists assert that men benefit more in marriages than women.

Female Lecturer **I** was very emotional on the issue of marriage. She used all the non-verbal cues to express her emotions such as banging the desk, holding a fist, and making facial

expressions which were serious in their intentions. I never knew I was exploring very sensitive issues until I came across this female lecturer. Yes, other lecturers showed their emotions but this lecturer in question showed that she could not contain her feelings. I also noticed her emotions during a lecture observation when she was discussing with students the theme of marriage in *Nervous Conditions***.** She condemned men's behaviour in all the literary texts. She showed that men were the origins of women suffering especially in marriages. There is no doubt that her ideas have a lot of influence on female students and some males as well. It was not only in observations that I noticed this behaviour, but even in some of the assignments she gave students. One assignment read; *Women can change society in a positive way if they are given the opportunity. How far do you agree with this assertion? Refer to Buchi, Dangarembga and Bâ's literary texts*. The question suggests gender sensitivity and recognition of unequal power relations.

Even after this study, I feel I owe her a visit to just talk about these issues. She had this to say on how women suffer in their marriages in reference to *Nervous Conditions:*

> *It is unfair for Babamukuru to treat Maiguru that way when she also works and brings money to the family. He is an example of a typical patriarchal figure that is entrapped in traditional practices, that's male-domination. Women should be liberated. Maiguru does not have the leverage to do that. She has no choice because at home, there are brothers who will not accept her back home because the brothers enjoy the privileges of being male in these repressive types of societies, they think you are stupid, otherwise they will start calling you names, a prostitute, all sorts of names. She has no choice but to go back and continue with her unhappy marriage. Patriarchy is engraved in both men and women. Why she would rather stay in the abusive marriage it's because it gives her respect, this makes her go back to her matrimonial home. Society respects women who are married, so disrespect is unacceptable. It is society that stipulates that only a married woman is respectful, hence female characters in the texts suffer in their abusive marriages because society expects them to remain confined in these homes* (**F-LI).**

The female lecturer blamed society for the suffering of women in marriages. She gave an example of Maiguru who would rather suffer in her marriage than to face humiliation in society. According to Maiguru, getting out is almost as bad as staying in the marriage (Stanko, 1985).However, female lecturer **I** blamed tradition on Maiguru's decision to come

back to an abusive marriage. To her, Maiguru is entrapped. On one hand, she wants to be emancipated and on the other, she wants to keep tradition. The female lecturer sympathised with Maiguru's situation which is helpless. She stated that, only married women get respect from society. According to her observations, women remain suffering in marriage because society expects to see them confined in the home. This indicates that women are economically and psychologically oppressed by societal expectations.

When I asked the female lecturer what she would have done if she was Maiguru, she said:

> *I would not allow that, I would not look after someone's children whilst the father enjoys beer. I would only allow in cases where there is need to, for example, if the children are orphaned, that is when I would come in. I would not mind attending to household chores at home but I would not like to provide resources like what Maiguru does for Jeremiah and Mai Tambu's wedding that is not my responsibility. It's good to help each other but not that way. Maiguru is coerced into doing things by Bamukuru because he paid lobola for her. She does not have the leverage to do what she likes. The text does not tell us that she sometimes volunteered to do things. I would not let myself suffer in the name of marriage. If the marriage does not work, I would rather move out and face the consequences alone. And in the texts, when Aissotou and Adah walk out of their matrimonial homes, they become economically independent, more than what they were in their matrimonial homes. Equipped with this education that I have, I would not seek refuge in men* **(F-LI).**

She did not hide the fact that if it was her she would have moved out. She said that she was not going to suffer in an abusive marriage like what Maiguru does. The other issue that she was against is, when Maiguru is forced to provide resources for Jeremiah and Mai Tambu's wedding. For example, providing her wedding gown and also taking care of Nhamo and Tambu while their parents were still alive. According to her, it is an unfair practice for a husband to force his wife to look after his relatives. She felt the wife should be consulted on such matters.

From the way the female lecturer was expressing her feelings, I could see an Aissotou of *So Long A Letter* in her. When Aissotou discovers that her marriage was not working, she decides to move out. She writes to her husband:

Princes master their feelings to fulfil their duties, 'Others' bend their heads and, in silence, accept a destiny that oppresses them…I will not yield to it…At the moment you tumbled from the highest rung of respect on which I have always placed you… I am stripping myself of your love, your name. Clothed in my dignity, the only worthy garment, I go my way (Bâ, pp.31-32).

Female lecturer **I** echoed so much the sentiments of the feminist writers. When these female characters move out of their matrimonial homes, equipped with their education, they become economically independent to the extent that Aissotou buys her friend a car. In the text, Ramatoulaye expressed that Aissotou found happiness when she moved out because of the education she had acquired. In other words, the author seems to be saying, women do not find happiness in marriage but they can find happiness in education. Therefore, the authors seem to say education is an alternative if marriage fails. Some lecturers said these texts were an eye opener to young girls. A male lecturer said:

> *Girls, today should be free to leave men who are abusive, because they can't be forced to live with such man because such men do not help them in any way. No one should be bonded by oppressive cultural traditional practices to remain with a useless person (showing anger).Look at what Jeremiah does to Mai Tambu, he makes her suffer, look at what Francis does to Adah, he makes her suffer too. Why should they be forced by tradition to live under such hard conditions? Just because they are married? I think this treatment of women by men should be put to an end. I wouldn't want to see my daughter suffering like that. I like Daba's character when she encourages her mother to leave her father, after he had married her friend, Binetou. Women have suffered enough.*(**M-LJ**).

According to male lecturer J, women should not be forced to stay in abusive marriages. He sympathised with female characters in the texts who suffer despite the good work they do for their families. He also gave examples of his daughters who he said he would not want to see suffering in marriage. He said he would tell them to leave and live an independent life. He was also against the idea of binding women to oppressive traditional practices where women are forced to stay in marriages no matter how bad the relationships are. The male lecturer's emotions seemed to have been evoked by the way married women in the texts are treated by their husbands. When he said that he would not let his daughter be treated like that, he really

meant what he said as was seen through his facial expressions and other non-verbal cues. He sounded disappointed in men who treat women like objects.

When I asked another male lecturer on his views on marriage, he said that women should leave their matrimonial homes if the environment is not friendly. He gave examples of female characters he supported in the texts:

> *Whether to emulate Ramatoulaye or Aissotou? I would go with Aissotou because she is assertive and rebellious. In the end, she becomes economically independent as compared to Ramatoulaye who suffers in marriage for a long time and remains wallowing in that unhappy marriage. Aissotou frees herself and emancipates herself without worrying about what the society would say about her, but she is worried about her happiness and that of her children. She is assertive that's why I admire her a lot. Another character I admire again is Celie in **The Color Purple**(though this text was not under study),after discovering that she was being abused, she moves out of her matrimonial home and becomes independent. The female characters should be juxtaposed in their context, Ramatoulaye is too passive, and Aissotou is a model to other women in society. One should not remain in the home suffering an abusive marriage* (**M-LF).**

The lecturer continued to say:

> *However, women are taught to be submissive to men, even in marriage; they should be docile and not to oppose men or to be equal to men. The woman is taught to listen to the husband and the man has to rule their households with a stern hand. For a woman to keep her marriage, she has to be docile. Men support women's docility from the bible. In Corinthians, Paul teaches that women should be submissive to their husbands. Zimbabwe is generally a Christian nation, so many women and men read about this from the bible and because of this, women tend to listen to Paul's advice and women suffer in silence because the bible teaches them to be thus but I advise women to stand up and fight for their freedom.*

Male lecturer F supported the idea that once a woman discovers that her marriage is not working, she has to move out. He wondered why tradition should be preserved when it makes women subject to abuse. The male lecturer did not hide his admiration of Aissotou, who after discovering that her marriage was not working walks out. He blamed Ramatoulaye who

remains suffering in her marriage in the name of tradition. He also blamed men who use the bible to oppress women. He said that, both men and women read the bible, and it is from the bible that each individual takes his/her position. The bible teaches submission to women and the men being the ruler of his household. He strongly advised women to stand up and fight for their rights and to walk out of their marriages if they are abusive.

The lecturer therefore felt that men are taking advantage of the bible to oppress women and women are also using the bible as a justification for their submissiveness. The lecturer was trying to show both men and women that, it is not about what the bible says but it is about looking at the pathetic situation of the women folk in society. Indirectly, he seemed to be saying people are abusing the bible to pursue their personal agendas. With the bible or not, the male lecturer advocated for the emancipation of women. However, there were some participants who believed in marriage. They believe that for one to be a complete woman, she needs a man by her side.

> *Some girls would say, I need to have someone to marry me, what will people say if I don't get a husband. Though they do appreciate that they are empowered by the education they are acquiring but still they feel they should be married, this all has to do with patriarchal influence* (**F-LB).**

Female lecturer B said this is one of the responses some of her female students gave during discussions. According to these girls, marriage gives them value in society. What they seem to be saying is that, if they do not get married, people will have negative attitudes towards them. This therefore points to the fact that even if these girls enter into abusive marriages, they would not mind as long as they are married. The girls will just conform to societal expectations of a married woman and not to worry about being oppressed or repressed.

> *Although we don't want to be oppressed and repressed, at times it's better to conform for peace's sake because if you have a husband who has traditional beliefs, at times you have to give in for the sake of saving your marriage, so we just give in to maintain peace so that the family does not disintegrate. Like what Ramatoulaye in* **So Long a Letter** *does when her husband abandons her and marries a young wife, the same age as her daughter. She remains in the marriage suffering. Her husband, Modou abandons her and goes to live with the young wife, Binetou. She confesses that there is nothing she can do except to preserve tradition, she belongs to the 'old school'* (**F-LI**).

To add on to the above expressions, female lecturer D said:

> *Some female students in my class said that a woman should stay in marriage no matter what. They said if I don't stay in the home what will the society say, they will say, I am a prostitute, and the males would say if one is not married, she is labelled loose* (**F-LD**).

Most lecturers have shown that most women suffer in marriages because they are entrapped by traditional cultural practices. They are helpless victims in these patriarchal societies as has been shown in the feminist literary texts they were engaged with. A feminist literary text is one which addresses the plight and agenda of the females. The main themes of such texts address the issues that affect women such as abuse and violence from their counterparts in marriages. Typically, feminist texts are authored by women writers who easily sympathise and empathise with their colleagues. Tambu sympathises with her mother, Nyasha and Maiguru. She is someone who grew up in a family like Jeremiah's, who always talks about marriage. He even tells Tambu to go to the kitchen so that she is taught to cook for her future husband. He does not care about education. Tambu wants education not a husband. So Tambu admires Nyasha because Babamukuru never talks about marriage. Tambu does not like the idea of marriage because she sees marriage as entrapping. To Tambu, Maiguru is entrapped. She soliloquises saying, if she and her mother were educated and had someone like Babamukuru, they would not let him do things the way he was doing. According to participants' observations, marriage seems to subject women to oppression.

The texts have shown that women sympathise with each other, especially those suffering from these abusive marriages. Ramatoulaye feels pity for Binetou (her co-wife) instead of jealous. She does not despise her at all. She talks good about Binetou:

Beautiful, lively, kind-hearted, intelligent…a victim, exiled in the world of adults, which was not her own…the seductive power of mature age, of silvery temples was unknown to Binetou (Bâ, p.48).

What pains Ramatoulaye most is that Binetou leaves school in order for her to marry Ramatoulaye's husband, Modou, who is as old as Binetou's father. That is why Ramatoulaye talks about the seductive power of mature age. She feels pity for her because she is also going to suffer in marriage at that tender age. Ramatoulaye wanted her to finish her education first so that she could equip herself for a better future.

In Virginia Wolf's novels, the author sees marriage as a primitive institution in decline and that motherhood and wifehood were Victorian relics. Woolf's claims are in contrast to some of the findings that came from this study, where participants showed that marriage gives women dignity in society. However, from the interviews, most indications were that marriage has lost respect especially in this generation where feminism is in vogue. Woolf's claims might be to a greater extent true.

In the literary texts, women who are abused or who are denied opportunities to do what they want, rebel. So, rebellion emerged as a theme from the interviews held. Lecturers had mixed feelings on the theme of rebellion. Others defined it as a means of females escaping from oppression. So, they would not call it rebellion but rather, women fighting for their rights. Others argued that the female characters were rebelling against conversion.

5.2.5 Rebellion

Female characters in feminist literary texts are ready to make their own decisions and deal with consequences of these choices, actions and decisions (Snodgrass, 2014). Most female characters in these texts make personal choices by fighting conversion and some of the female characters suffer the consequences. She further expounds that it is important to note that not all works of feminists have happy endings, both for the character and for the author of the work. Egejuru and Katrak (1997, p.45) commented that, "Nyasha sees herself crushed by the patriarchal control of her father. Her rebellion and the subsequent futility of her efforts make her psychologically sick. She is afflicted by an eating disorder called anorexia nervosa." Snodgrass (2014) expands that women have been ostracised by society for openly demanding equality and have had to face several negative consequences of their own decision to go against the tides. Nyasha, in *Nervous Conditions* breaks down because she tries to rebel. She cannot take it when her father forces her to do what she does not like to do. Nyasha's rebellious nature is equated to Anowa, Ama Ata Aidoo's female protagonist, in *Anowa* (a literary text outside this study). She defied all odds to marry the husband she liked without consent from her male elders as society expected her to do. She asserts her independence and individuality in a matter where parental consent is imperative. However, she suffers when after a period of a childless marriage, her husband Kofi Ako sends her back

to her parents but she could not go back. In the end, she commits suicide. This shows that not all female protagonists of feminist literature end on a happy note.

Nyasha' mother, Maiguru tries to rebel by running away but she does not succeed; she finds herself back to her unhappy marriage. Male lecturer A had this to say:

> In **Nervous Conditions**, Maiguru runs away at a certain point because she is not happy with the way Babamukuru behaves, she rebels. But after a day or two, she comes back because she is entrapped by tradition, with her Master's degree**,** she finds herself helpless**.**

According to male lecturer A, Maiguru's fleeing from her husband shows that she is rebelling which, according to tradition, is not acceptable. Babamukuru had paid lobola for her; she should have contained the situation and stay calm in her marriage. In Joyce Simango's **Zviuya zviri mberi (**a Shona novel, translated, it means there is hope for tomorrow), Munhamo (No freedom from trouble),a rebellious wife runs away from her husband with her nine year old daughter in order to save her from marriage to an old man. Munhamo's husband wants to exchange his daughter for the bride wealth he needs to 'buy' his sixth wife. Unlike Maiguru, Munhamo never went back to her troubled marriage. She took a radical stance of breaking convention. She could not watch her daughter being sold like a commodity on the market.

As for Nyasha, Maiguru's daughter this is what he said:

> Nyasha challenges her father, that is fighting patriarchy, it's not good, the father figure should not be undermined, and there are values where the father is responsible for that, the daughter should listen to the father, Babamukuru as a grown up knows the consequences. There is a way of socialisation in every society. If the father says, I don't want you to smoke, she should listen to him. The father should teach moral values to children. Nyasha is a girl and she needs protection from a male because she is prone to abuse. She does not want to listen but she decides otherwise. Nyasha rebels against her father, she is just rebellious. It might be her temperament, she has been to England where she got a different socialisation altogether, she forgets that she is in an African setting. In England, she used to mix with white women; she is used to a different kind of setting. Daughters don't punch their fathers; this idea of a daughter pushing a father and punching him is not tolerable at all **(M-LA)**.

However, female lecturer I contradicted this lecturer by stating that:

Nyasha fights the status quo physically to assert her rights, she is not as docile as Maiguru, these characters epitomise 2 camps, those who subscribe to male domination and those women who think they must fight patriarchy. She is unlike Maiguru, Nyasha is assertive, she rises to say, I should be treated like this, on the other side, I see women as fighting for their freedom and not to be docile at all but to fight for their freedom, I also encourage the female students I teach not to be docile but to stand up for their rights. The women are right to fight patriarchy, try to assert themselves and not to be subjugated by their male counterparts. And when women fight for their rights, people say they are being rebellious. I don't agree with that .

Female lecturer I totally disagreed that when women fight for their rights they are being rebellious. She supported Nyasha, who most lecturers condemned as being rebellious. The female lecturer's argument was that, because her father, Babamukuru treats her and her brother unfairly that is why she rebels. She has discovered that her father was being unfair to her because Chido, her brother is allowed to come home any time he feels like and she was given restrictions. She argued that, after all, her smoking of cigarettes was as a result of the socialisation that she got from England. It was him, Babamukuru who took Nyasha to England. What else could she have done? She sees the inequalities in the home and that is why she is fighting. According to feminists, this oppressive patriarchal system should be fought in whatever form and this is precisely what Nyasha is doing.

In **So Long A Letter**, the trio of girls are caught smoking but all they show is that, girls are also free to do what they want. They wear trousers which is a taboo in their culture. Women have been oppressed for quite a long time and now they are trying to liberate themselves. As they do so, society labels them rebels. Some participants showed that they were worried about the restrictions put on women and girls by society. At the end of the day, when they fail to conform to these expectations, they are said to be rebellious. Some female lecturers were not happy with so much societal expectations from women and girls, whilst some male participants thought women and girls in the texts were rebellious and showed that they were not comfortable with such behaviour.

Being rebellious in an African culture, is taboo and unheard of and a mischief in society and also dangerous. If these women are allowed to do this, this world will be turned upside down. Yes, we agree that they should fight for their rights but not

*physically like what Nyasha and Tambu in **Nervous Conditions** do and how Adah fights Francis in **Second Class Citizen**. This is too extreme and in this case, the literature becomes extreme (**M-LJ).***

Male Lecturer E echoed lecturer J:

Women should be emancipated through these literary texts but not to be extreme, they should show respect and should not overdo it but should respect our African culture. Although women are justified, I prefer the situation where things don't go out of control, to take things too radical, I don't like this extremist position of Nyasha, yes there should be equality but I don't like the extremist view, physical fight is an exaggeration though for a point, so that society should see. She rebels against her father, she is resentful of everything. She does not want to follow her culture, at the end of the day, she does not succeed, and she has a nervous breakdown.

The male lecturers showed that they did not like the way these women fight in the texts. Male lecturer J showed that he was very angry with women who rebel. He showed that if this literature is what it is teaching women to do, then it should not good. In **Muriel at Metropolitan** (1969), (a literary text which was not under study), Miriam Tlali, created a female character Muriel, a young woman with whom thousands could identify. She is an urban, educated, working mother, an image which contrasts sharply with that of the black woman as domestic or peasant. The publications Control Board considered it to be not good and it was banned. Chitando (2011) also showed that literary texts which portray women positively were considered bad for readers. Male lecturer M echoed the same sentiments.

According to male lecturer M, it is taboo to fight against a man, and to make matters worse, Adah fought her husband. He agreed that women should fight but not to fight physically like what happens in the texts. He showed that he was totally against this because he felt that the world would be disorderly if women were allowed to fight against men. Male lecturer E registered the same sentiments. He also felt that the portrayal of Nyasha's character is too extreme and such characters are not allowed in society. Like his colleague, he believed that women should fight for their rights but not physically fighting like what the women characters in the texts did. The male lecturers expressed concern over such radicalism. Lecturer E blamed Nyasha for her breakdown because he thought it was because she did not want to follow her Shona culture.

Some male and female lecturers showed that they did not support the authors' portrayal of such female characters. It therefore implies that these lecturers think that feminist literature becomes extreme (Chitando, 2011). From the literature reviewed, Chitando showed that once women write about women's problems, their literature is viewed as unfit for public consumption. This is what happened in this study in which some participants showed that they do not want women to fight physically. They raised the concern that literature which portrays women fighting has a negative influence on society. This is what Chitando was writing about and her concerns have proved to be true in this study. However, Lalwani (2011) stated that, not all feminist literature has a happy ending but characters are ready to suffer consequences of the choices they make, as does Nyasha in *Nervous Conditions.* Nyasha fought against her father because she thought he was too much in control of everyone, *"We grovel to him, I won't grovel to him. Oh no, I won't. I am not a good girl. I'm evil, I won't grovel, I won't die"* **(Dangarembga, p. 200).**Nyasha's determination not to submit to her father is what the lecturers condemned. However, she has a nervous breakdown at last and the participants said it was caused by her refusal to give in to her father whom she called, "a revered patriarchy" **(p.97).**

However, another female lecturer supported the fighting of female characters in the literary texts:

> *Women should not watch situations going out of hand in the name of patriarchy, there are times they should fight. Tambu fights Nhamo. It was a public fight, to me she is justified, she had worked very hard to raise her fees, Nhamo is depriving her opportunity to go to school. To be rebellious or not being rebellious, women should fight patriarchy. Women don't fight because socialisation has taught them to be meek, soft and obedient but in actual fact, they can, just like Maiguru who is mildly militant and she fits well in the Zimbabwean society where a woman is supposed to play a subservient role. Nyasha fights her father because the system is not fair and Adah in* **Second Class Citizen** *fights her husband because she has been abused for a long time* **(F-LB).**

Female lecturer B strongly supported women who fight for fairness and equality in society. She also felt women should not just watch situations going out of control just because they are women. There is need to fight physically. She believes that it is the socialisation process

that taught women not to fight but to accept their subservient positions in society. She emphasised that, if women are confronted with demanding situations, they should fight.

The female lecturer's belief is that, it is society that teaches women that they cannot fight. This concurs with Morojele's (2009) study where he found out that girls in his society fought in the absence of adults (teachers) for fear of being labeled deviant. The reason why they were fighting was due to the fact that boys had molested them for a long time. They could not contain it and had to fight. The female characters in the literary texts fought because their situations were no longer bearable to them.This only indicates that women can no longer keep quiet under these repressive conditions. Tambu might not show her rebelliousness towards Babamukuru but inwardly, she admires Nyasha who rebels against Babamukuru. Tambu is quite aware that Babamukuru rules his house with a stern hand but there is nothing she can do about it. Babamukuru provides her with school fees. So, in order to achieve her ambitions, she keeps quiet but Nyasha would not let him do that. Female lecturer D had this to say in support of women fighting:

> *Nyasha was rebellious and wouldn't let anyone interfere with her life. Tambu admires Nyasha who would not let herself be entrapped in cultural practices. Nyasha sees her mother who is entrapped by tradition, which is why she fights. She would not let her father continue abusing the women in the house. Like Nyasha, Lucia would not let men in Jeremiah's family do what they want. She even goes to the dare where women are not allowed, to confront Takesure. The men in the family know her assertiveness and no men dares to answer her back*.

She further went on to say, women should fight in their homes just like what Nyasha does in the text. This is what she said:

> *Adah should not have left her husband; she should have fought and remain with Francis. She should not have surrendered. Even what Maiguru does is wrong, she should have fought. Aissotou should have also done the same. If Nyasha did it to her father, why couldn't these other women do it? It is unfortunate Nyasha breaks down in the end. But I would want to think this fight changed Babamukuru somehow although the text does not say it. In the three texts, the female characters should not have run away, Maiguru does well by coming back home. Women should fight from within, if women run away and not fight; they will continue to suffer under patriarchy,*

so patriarchy should be fought. It is fighting and not rebellion as others would like to call it **(F-LD).**

The female lecturer supported her colleagues' views on women fighting men. In her argument, she blamed Aissotou and Adah who move away from their matrimonial homes. She said that these women should not have gone away. They should have fought their battles in their homes, because if women do not fight, they will continue to suffer. She said women's fighting does not show rebelliousness but they will be fighting the unfair practices in societies that are dominated by men. She also argued that, this is not rebellion but it is fighting the bad system that oppresses women.

Female lecturer D showed that if women remain in their subservient position in society and do not fight, the struggle for recognition will not be achieved at all. Women need to fight within the system, which is why the lecturer supported Maiguru who comes back to fight her husband from within. She discovers that there is no need to run away from the husband but it is necessary that she tells her husband that she wants to be treated like a human being. Therefore, women's struggles cannot be fought by running away from men but by facing each situation as it comes. The whole idea of fighting is because women should emancipate themselves from patriarchal bondage. Francis was surprised when Adah started fighting him. All along he thought he was in control of the situation but Adah started fighting back.

*"But she was beginning to hit him back even biting him when need be if that was the language he wanted" (*Bâ p.154)**.

By so doing, Adah fights the African belief that the wife and the girl must be vulnerable, defenceless and subservient. Crossman (2009) identifies women as powerless and defenceless victims of ever deepening oppression, rooted in layers of male supremacist tradition. Therefore, women are fighting that system which looks at them as an inferior sex. The women are breaking this cycle and fight what they believe in. In other feminist literary texts, women also fight. Sophia in **The Color Purple** was always bashing her husband after she discovered that the abuse was not going to stop. Martha in **She No Longer Weeps** does not only fight back but she kills Freddy. This shows that if women are subjected to oppression, they will fight the oppressive system.

Lecturers had different views on this theme of rebellion. Most lecturers supported this rebellion. In fact, it is not rebellion according to them but it is fighting patriarchy. Most

lecturers observed that most male-female relationships in the literary texts are strained, therefore this emanated as a theme. They described the relationships as master and servant. Their views on this are discussed in the following section.

5.2.6 Female and male relationships

The relationship between males and females is a theme that was discussed during the course of the interviews. Most participants felt that in many cases in the texts, males and females are always in conflict. It is not only in these three texts that are under study where women and men are always in conflict, but also in other feminist literary texts. **In Scarlet Song,** Mireille and Ousmane are in conflict because Ousmane wants Mireille to be a servant to cultural demands. In **The Color Purple,** Sophia and Harpo always fight because Harpo treats Sophia like a minor. It is a world of conflicts between women and men. The participants had this to say:

> *I want to comment on the authors themselves first. From the look of things, these female authors do not have good relationships with males because of the way they present male characters in their texts. Their presentation shows that these authors are female chauvinists. They present male authors who are lazy and dull against hard-working intelligent female characters and males who oppress and exploit women. When one reads these texts, it is easy to identify the authors' attitudes towards males. Already, we can see that they have strained relationships, so what can we expect of her male and female characters* (**F-LD)**?

Female lecturer D emphasised that these authors are just presenting what they feel towards males through their female characters in the texts. She was of the view that they do not have good relationships with men themselves, so there is no way they can present to their readers, women and men who relate well. She felt that the way they present characters show that they are looking for sympathy from females as well as from other males. She showed a bitter tone towards these feminist authors. The female lecturer has undoubtedly shown that these feminist authors have a bias against males. The feminist authors' male and female characters do not relate well in the texts because in most cases, they collide because of cultural beliefs. Women find themselves entrapped in patriarchy and when they try to entangle themselves from patriarchal bondage, they end up fighting against men or refusing to be enslaved in these beliefs. Stanko (1985, p.19) states that "women do resist, persistently and tenaciously,

the effects of male violence. Women are survivors." However, some lecturers showed that they were not happy with the portrayal of such relationships.

> *Nyasha fights back, when reprimanded, she forgets that she is in an African setting. Daughters don't punch their fathers; this idea of a daughter pushing a father is not tolerable at all. This shows that father and daughter do not relate with each other quite well. The way the father talks to her daughter and the way she answers back shows that she does not respect her father* **(M-LJ).**

Male lecturer **J** blamed Nyasha for fighting her father. He felt that Nyasha as a child should have listened to what her father was telling her. When he talked about an African setting, he was referring to the traditional beliefs that no child whether male or female, is allowed to defy a parent's orders. He felt that Nyasha's move to hit back at her father is totally unacceptable in the African setting. He sounded disappointed in Nyasha. By defying her father's orders, Nyasha fights the oppressive system of society because her father is an epitome of that oppressive system. Nnaemeka (1997, p. 37) describes Nyasha and her father's relationship. She says "Babamukuru treats his daughter Nyasha atrociously, trying to control her sexuality and even her food intake. In one critical scene, he strikes her and calls her a whore because she is late, coming home from a school dance." Nyasha does not want to be controlled like that, so a strained relationship develops between them. The males want to continue dominating and females on the other hand, fight for equality and freedom. This struggle is referred to by Marxist feminists as a class struggle. For Marxist Feminists, the concept of social class is considered to be more important than the concept of patriarchy since the latter is seen as a form of ideology that stems from class exploitation (Otkin, 2009). The reason why males and females in the texts do not have good relationships is because men want to have power over women and this is what women are trying to fight. Liberal feminists hope to achieve equality between men and women but not through fighting. They advocate for negotiation through legislation. The idea of fighting here is equated to radicalism. This study advocates for more feminist literary texts in the undergraduate English curriculum. The study does not take a radical stance in its advocacy for this equality. Through engaging with lecturers and students in discussions, the study hoped to see a change of the status quo in the university undergraduate English curriculum.

Some lecturers supported these women who fight men:

Tambu fights Nhamo, she is justified; she had worked very hard to raise her fees. She does not fight for the sake of fighting, she has a cause. She has developed a bad attitude towards Nhamo because Nhamo as a boy is favoured by the parents. As a boy, he believes that he can do anything he wants, he can rule women. This creates tension between brother and sister, which is why Tambu was not sorry when his brother Nhamo died **(M-LJ).**

Male lecturer J supported Tambu's behaviour towards Nhamo. He expressed that Tambu does not fight for the sake of fighting but she fights for a cause. He said Tambu had developed a bad attitude towards Nhamo because Nhamo had all the privileges because he was a boy. The way Nhamo is socialised makes him believe that he can do whatever he wants with women but unknowingly, Nhamo creates a gulf between him and his sister to the extent that Tambu does not feel sorry when Nhamo died. The male lecturer seemed to support Tambu's attitude towards her brother's death.

This is indicative of the extent to which cultural practices can influence individuals' attitudes towards each other. It also measures the extent to which socialisation can shape individuals. Tambu and Nhamo are always in conflict with each other. Morojele's (2009) study found that socialisation influences individuals' attitudes towards the other gender. And usually, the attitude is negative. The problem is that our societies are male supremacist societies and women struggle to fight that system. Tradition states that women should be docile but women are resisting that and therefore, conflicts between men and women arise.

There are conflicts and strained, in some situations there is battle for supremacy but traditionally, we know that women are expected to play a subservient role but there are individual characters who try to fight patriarchal establishment and to try to improve the social reality of women in society, so in general, their relationships are strained on the basis of those gender roles and their expectations. We largely have a supremacist male system and men who are an epitome of a dominant male patriarchy and Babamukuru and Jeremiah are examples of such men. Women are also fighting that patriarchy, like Tambu in **Nervous Conditions** *who challenges Nhamo to a fight and Nyasha fights the status quo physically, to assert her rights* **(M-LE)**

The male lecturer believed that when Tambu challenged Nhamo to a fight, she is also challenging patriarchy. He also observed that gender roles and expectations are other factors that promote conflicts between women and men. He also mentioned that Tambu fights the

status quo, in which women are expected to cling to traditional beliefs that men are superior to them. Male supremacy hurts women so much to the extent that they stand up to fight. Foucault argues that, men wield power in society and they control everything including women. Women's lives and destiny are determined by men.

On the relationships in marriages, male lecturer E said:

> *The texts present a master-servant relationship. In **Nervous Conditions,** Babamukuru treats his wife like a minor, he expects her to do as he says. She is not consulted on anything concerning family matters. He rules his household with a stern hand. In **Second Class Citizen,** Francis abuses Adah, their relationship is strained. They are always fighting. In **So Long A Letter,** Modou and Mawdo treat their women without respect. They have the power that has been bestowed to them by patriarchy. So, they can do whatever pleases them.*

The argument that is presented by the above participant is that, relationships in marriages in these texts are not amicable to the extent that they become master-servant relationships. He seemed to blame men for the bad relationships that exist in these marriages. These men do not respect their wives. They do whatever pleases them because they have power over women. Florence Stratton describes the relationship that exists between Ekweeme's father and his second wife. She calls her 'Lord' "My Lord, your food is ready. Please come soon my Lord your foo-foo may get hardened" (Stratton, p.84).Women become powerless in marriages.

The marriages in the feminist texts under study are characterised by abuse and disrespect. The wives suffer because of their sex and the husbands enjoy the privileges of being males in a society that is male-dominated.

Despite the oppressive conditions these women operate under and the abuse they get from their male counterparts, they always strive for the best. In many cases they become creative to beat the system, so the theme of women's creativity was discussed.

Women's creativity

Creativity was referred to by participants as the ability to exploit any situation in which someone finds herself or himself in.

Female characters that have been presented by the three feminist authors were observed by participants as being very creative in their different circumstances. When they face challenges, they do not just sit back and surrender, they face the challenges with assertiveness. Women in the texts discover that the system is not fair to them and the only way that can make them survive in that system is to be creative. They are strong women; some are stronger than men. In **Second Class Citizen,** Adah discovers that her only salvation in this patriarchal system is in education. She struggles against all odds to get the education that was going to liberate her from the oppressive system. The system in America does not allow her to continue with her education but for her to continue with her education, she marries Francis. It is a marriage of convenience; Francis is the only male figure that she can exploit to get what she wants. She does not marry Francis because she loves him, but because she wants to accomplish her ambitions. Indeed, she succeeds. In **Nervous Conditions,** Tambu discovers that the patriarchal system does not allow her to go to school. She grows maize in order to get school fees. She has discovered that only education can liberate her mother and sisters from oppression and poverty. She clears the land herself and grows the maize. She succeeds in doing that. Lucia on the other hand, makes use of Babamukuru to get a job at the Mission and when she gets the job, she starts literacy classes from the first grade. In **So Long A Letter,** Aissotou makes use of education, she becomes economically independent to the extent of buying her friend a car.

Lecturers had different views on women creativity:

> *Women in these texts are very creative, intellectual as well as physical creativity. Nhamo does not match Tambu intellectually. In most cases, his arguments show that he is not intelligent. He is lazy like his father. The girls in the home do everything. That is why he steals Tambu's maize cobs; he does not have the brains to reason. Tambu is creative; she wants to generate money so that she can go to school. Nhamo waits to be provided with everything* **(F-LH).**

The female lecturer's argument above was that women are more creative than men. She gave an example of Tambu who becomes creative to get her fees. Nhamo is different from Tambu because he waits to be provided with everything. Juxtaposing the male and female characters, the lecturer observed that women are more creative than men. She also mentioned that Nhamo does not match Tambu's intellect. He steals Tambu's maize cobs because he cannot reason like Tambu. The lecturer praised Tambu for her creativity and condemned Nhamo

who waits to be provided for by his parents. This might be because the system is in favour of men, so Nhamo can easily get what he wants as compared to Tambu. In this system, women have to work very hard to get what they wish to have or get. The system is very unfair, it is oppressive on women. The liberal feminists argue that, a just society is one in which all individuals have the right to exercise their autonomy and to fulfill themselves regardless of their sex or gender (Beasley, 1999). It has its belief in or advocacy of women's social, political, and economic rights, especially with regard to equality of sexes (Brooks, 2007).The lecturers have shown that the system is very unfair to women to the extent that they have to be creative in order to achieve their ambitions in life.

Male lecturer G had this to say:

> *I don't understand why Tambu would do that when there are male figures in the home. She is just a woman who does not listen to her parents. She is told that there are no financial resources to send both Nhamo and her to school. She should have just waited for her turn, instead of going against her parents' advice. Adah does the same, she marries Francis for convenience but she does not enjoy the marriage. These women are just trying to go against societal expectations and nothing else .I think their creativeness is not called for.*

Tambudzai had worked hard and Nhamo was depriving her of the sources of her school fees. It is part of the socialisation that one gets from society that makes one to behave like Nhamo. He does not see the importance of Tambu's hard-work; he listens to his father telling Tambu that she cannot feed books to her husband. Mai Tambu also fends for the family; she does a lot of hard work. She even thatches her hut with the help of other females. The women become creative because the society is harsh to them. If women do not become creative, life would be very difficult for them whilst males enjoy the privileges of being males.

One male lecturer had this to say concerning Adah:

> *I don't like what Adah does in **Second Class Citizen,** marrying Francis for convenience. She is just using him. Francis has nothing and Adah has everything. What type of a marriage is that? I think that is why Francis always beats Adah because he wants her to know that he is the man of the house despite the fact that he has completely nothing to contribute to the family. I would want to think that here,*

> *Adah's creativeness does not take her anywhere, except to be abused by Francis (**M-LC**).*

Male lecturer C condemned Adah for her creativity of marrying Francis for convenience. Maybe he has forgotten that the system is not in favour of single women in Britain. The only way Adah has to do is to beat the system by marrying Francis for her to be given citizenship. Adah has many ambitions that she has to fulfil that is why she marries Francis.

The two lecturers do not appreciate women's creativity in the texts. Lecturer C blamed Adah for marrying Francis for convenience. Therefore, he supported Francis' brutality towards Adah. He blamed Adah for being creative in that way. Lecturer G does not see any creativity in these women but he sees women who are fighting existing social structures. To him, Tambu is just disobedient to her parents, as a child, she should not have gone to those extremes. Adah, on the other hand, should also not have married Francis in order to fulfil her ambition, which is the reason why Francis does not respect her.

The lecturers did not take into consideration that Tambu and Adah are just victims of circumstances because of their sex. If these women lacked creativity, they would also have suffered like Jeremiah's wife, Mai Tambu.

I would like to conclude by discussing what I observed during lecture observations. This is to augment the findings I got from the interviews with lecturers.

During observations, lecturers and students differed in some cases. One of the differences I deciphered was a generation gap. I also observed that both lecturers and students had mixed feelings towards these feminist literary texts. The lecturers were older than most students, so, in some cases, they gave examples of things that were happening in the 1960s.What was interesting was that, even before the lecturer had finished what she/ he wanted to say, already, students' hands would be up. At a certain point, I was amused when a female participant said, "Let me stand up otherwise you won't hear what I am saying because I am short." She did not stand up, in fact, she sprung from her chair, I could see how emotional she was about how women are oppressed in society. This showed me that I had embarked on an emotional subject that affected both males and females. I was able to decipher their attitudes towards feminism during these observations.

One example was when a male lecturer said women should realise that they were paid for when they got married, therefore, should do what the husband wants. He said as a wife, she

should also do the will of her husband as the bible says. Most students both male and female did not agree with him. They argued that lobola is just a token of appreciation and should never be used as a tool to oppress women. They even argued that it should be abolished because men were taking advantage of lobola. Of course, there were a few students who sided with him but these were also as old as the lecturer himself. From the observations, it was evident that some of them still belonged to the old generation and wanted to impart their old ideas onto this new generation. However, one male lecturer agreed with students that, he belonged to the 'old school' and things were changing now and a dynamic shift from the past was inevitable. In support of the findings from my observations, literature reviewed showed that McCracken (2002) was surprised by the results he got from his male and female students. From the reading they had done, he had expected male students to side with male characters and female students to side with female characters. He had assumed that patriarchy was still dominant in these young adults but then, he discovered that patriarchy had no place whatsoever in that generation. Gender had nothing to do with the interpretations of the texts. What he found out was a generation gap. The observations made in this study also showed that the reason why the lecturers' views differed from the young students' is that of the generation gap. The lecturers' old ideologies were no longer applicable to the new generation. I could not talk to the lecturer during the observation, so I made a follow up of his argument during the interview. I wanted him to explain fully what it meant to belong to the 'old school.' He had this to say:

> *Look at my generation, these issues were never discussed, I belong to the old generation ' the old school' where women were supposed to behave in a certain manner but because of these new ideas, liberal ideas, the feminist ideas, one has to change and go by what is happening although conservatively, but I think there is need for change. Society is changing* (**M-LA**).

The lecturer had to submit to feminist ideologies because he was directly engaged with them in the feminist literary texts he was teaching undergraduate students. He admitted that he was still clinging to old beliefs about men and women. However, he said there was need to change since he was always engaged with these new feminist ideologies and always interacting with this new generation of feminism.

The last theme that was discussed was the representation of the feminist literary texts in the undergraduate English curriculum. After a detailed discussion with lecturers on the feminist

literary texts, I wanted to find out what they say about these texts in relation to their representation in the university undergradute English curriculum. The last critical research question was; what are lecturers and students' views on the representation of feminist literary texts in the undergraduate English curriculum?

5.2.7 Representation of feminist literary texts in the undergraduate English curriculum

During interviews, some lecturers confessed that they had never bothered to look at the ratio of feminist literary texts to other texts. They said traditionally, they are used to study mainly male-authored texts. The moment they sit down to select literary texts for the following semester, they just find themselves choosing mainly male-authored texts. One male lecturer said this was something he had never thought about. He only realised it when I asked him about the feminist literary texts they were studying with students. This is what he said to me in his indigenous language; *Koi mi makambozvifunga seiko kuita study yakadai? (*Literally transferred, it means, how did you think of carrying out such a study)? I told him that I had discovered it during my Master's studies, when I was analysing feminist literary texts. I noticed that they were not very popular at university level, yet they deal with important gender issues that are topical which can change society in a positive way. So, I told him that I had come to find out their views on the few feminist literary texts they were teaching. He said he was going to make sure that there was adequate representation of feminist voices in the English curriculum because such texts address critical gender issues. I promised him that I was going to make a follow up study to see whether he and others would have implemented that at the university.

Lecturers showed that the inadequate representation of feminist literary texts is due to how women's works were viewed in the traditional literary canon. The idea of inadequate representation of women's works is due to the inferior status that is accorded women in society. Chitando (2011) argues that African women writers have protested against this in African literature. African literature was male dominated. With the passage of time, she laments, women writers appeared on the scene.

Aidoo (2007) laments that women's works are inadequately represented in institutions of higher learning.This is also visible in universities in Zimbabwe, as is the case of the

inadequate representation of feminist literary texts in the selected university undergraduate English curriculum. The universities should be seen advocating for equality in all spheres of life because most policies start with higher institutions of learning such as universities. Liberal Feminists believe that women have been and are marginalised in society because of their sex.

From the literature reviewed, Nkomo and Ngambi's (2009) discussions on Zimbabwean universities are that, higher education is a major site of cultural practice, identity formation and symbolic control. Shabalala (2009) cites Austin and Austin (2000, p.2) who say the challenge for higher education is to "empower students, by helping them develop those special talents and attitudes that will enable them to become effective social change agents." They also observed that, students are not likely to commit to making changes in society unless the institutions in which they have been trained display similar commitment. Universities have always presented possibilities and problems for women, being the sites both of the reproduction of modernist patriarchal and colonial relations as well as of the production of feminist, postmodern, postcolonial critiques of the universal (Blackmore, 2002).

The following were lecturers' views on the representation of feminist literary texts in the undergraduate English curriculum.

Male lecturer **C** had the following to say when **I** asked him how many literary texts they were teaching and how many were feminist texts:

> *We are doing about 12 texts, 3 are feminist literary texts by Dangarembga, Mariama Ba and Emecheta, most are male-authored and a few by female writers. There is the difference because female writers   came late in the scene and male authors have been there since time immemorial and are established, therefore, feminist texts are not found on the market, there are many male authors, and female writers are a recent phenomenon, So, we draw from male authors. I will include as many feminist literary texts as I could, if they are available in the market, fifty-fifty, as long as they tackle topical issues, and meet our academic standards, and then they can be offered.*

I asked him what he meant by their academic standards, this is what he said:

> *They deal with feminist issues which are topical these days, an area which is popular globally; whether they have tackled this area, and have discussed gender disparities.*

*So, there would be need to include them in the undergraduate English curriculum. Now that you have brought out this, I am sure every time I am planning on literary texts that should be included, I will be very cautious of my deliberations (**M-LC).***

Male lecturer C explained that the inadequate representation of feminist literary texts in the undergraduate English curriculum is not a deliberate move by lecturers who were teaching this course. As for him, it showed that he was ignorant about the importance of including the feminist literary texts in the curriculum. At the back of his mind, he was still thinking of the education that he went through, where prominence was given to male-authored texts. This is what Al-Ghafari (1998) and other researchers were referring to when they said the school reproduce and reinforce patriarchal ideologies. It was only after engaging with him that he realised it was important to include as many feminist literary texts as is possible. In other words, he was conscientised on the need of adding more feminist literary texts in the English curriculum during the course of this study.

The introduction of women writings is a relatively new phenomenon in the Zimbabwean education curricula, so their representation has been observed by male lecturer C as normal. These texts were never considered in institutions of higher learning. Ama Ata Aidoo, one of the twenty-first century prominent feminist writers laments that women writings are underrepresented in institutions of higher learning (Aidoo, 2007). This is supported by the findings in this study. Some lecturers also gave other reasons for the inadequate representation of feminist literary texts in the undergraduate English curriculum. Female lecturer I had this to say:

The underrepresentation of women is not a new thing in this university. So, it's not surprising that feminist writings are underrepresented in the undergraduate English curriculum because women here at this university are underrepresented. It's pathetic to see how patriarchy is engrained even in these academics. I would like to see women taking in significant positions of power in this university, a balanced sex representation of membership in different committees in this university. These students will carry this gospel of equality to society and I know that they are capable of changing societal negative attitudes towards women. In the university, the Vice-chancellor is a man, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor is a man, Deans of Faculties are men, deputy Deans are men, except for only two deputy Deans who are women, and Chairpersons are men, except for one woman. So, you can see from the ratio that

women are marginalised, therefore, underrepresented. I would like to see women getting into these positions of decision making. There is an insignificant figure of representation, so honestly, how do you expect to see equality in the number of texts written by females in the university undergraduate English curriculum?

Female lecturer I's argument was that, since this university is characterised by patriarchal influence, it follows suit that the feminist literary texts are inadequately represented in the undergraduate English curriculum. When I asked her how she selects the literary texts for her group, she said:

When I joined the university; the situation was like that, so I just maintained the status quo. Now, that this has been brought to our attention, there is need to sit down together, both male and female lecturers and map a way forward to have a fair representation of these texts. These texts are very important since they deal with topical issues. The students we teach here are future leaders, and they are also teachers, which mean that, they will also carry the gospel of equality to society. So, there is need for them to learn about gender equality **(F-LI).**

Female lecturer I showed that she was not happy to see women being marginalised in the university. She also explained that the reason why gender issues are not taken seriously at the university is because most influential positions are occupied by men. To her, the representation of feminist literary texts is a result of male dominance in the university. She further elaborated that most males are engrained in tradition, thereby believing in male superiority which leads them to select mainly male authors. Consciously or unconsciously, these male lecturers perpetuate gender inequality. Al-Ghafari (1999), Morojele (2009) and Singh (1998) found that, the school is a vehicle for the transmission of societal beliefs, norms and values, and therefore, perpetuate gender inequality.

However, she also mentioned that when she came to the university, the undergraduate English curriculum had more male-authors than feminist authors, so she just maintained the status quo. On her part, it was not a deliberate move to marginalise these feminist literary texts in the undergraduate English curriculum.

Male lecturer D had this to say on the representation of feminists literary texts:

It's the availability of male-authored literary texts that determines the choice; the feminist thrust is a new phenomenon in our society, the texts are most male authored.

There are there but they are very few, feminist authors couldn't publish their works; their works are prejudiced against males. There is a niche towards culture, the culture we grew up is male- dominated, the Zimbabwean culture, so it is engraved in our hearts that males dominate and so the choice is influenced by patriarchal influence. The literary history the world over shows that women had to use pseudonyms to publish their works and the literary canon didn't believe that women could write something meaningful and for public consumption, there were negative perceptions towards women writers. However, there is need to change these perceptions as lecturers (**M-L D**).

Male lecturer D stated that, the underrepresentation of feminist literary texts was due to the fact that women's works were traditionally prejudiced against males. The male-dominated publishing houses did not grant opportunities for women to publish, so women had to publish their works using male pseudonyms; one such example is Mary Ann Evans(George Eliot). Beside women's works being prejudiced in the publishing house, the lecturer also submits that they also find themselves choosing male-authored texts because of the influence of patriarchy. He however acknowledged that there was need for change of attitudes towards works written by women.

To support the above view, Chitando (2011) argues that, African women writers have protested against the marginalisation of women in African literature. Musvoto (2006) narrates how aspiring black Zimbabwean women writings were shunned by men due to patriarchal beliefs. He said publishers formed a counterproductive alliance detrimental to women's writing. He refers to one Zimbabwean woman writer who said her first manuscript was complete when her husband burnt it saying she was not giving him due attention. Julia Luwanda, a Shona woman writer, said Shona men tend to regard women's ideas, writings or literary attempts as not worthwhile for public digestion (Musvoto, 2006).

Female lecturer I had this to say:

People might not understand the way things work in society. We pass through the socialisation process and this influences us a lot in all the decisions and the choices we make in life. This underrepresentation of women did not start with us here at the university. This started long ago, so it is not surprising that when we choose literary texts, obviously our backgrounds influence us. This starts from home, then the school, the cycle goes on like that. True, women have been marginalised globally because of

*their sex. They are deemed inferior to men. So, the underrepresentation of feminist texts is not unique at all. Maybe you can advocate for the change of the status quo but first of all you have to re-socialise society (***F-LI***).*

Female lecturer I, like her colleagues blamed patriarchy for the choices they make in choosing literary texts. She blamed the socialisation process which she believes shapes the attitude of an individual towards the opposite gender. To her, it is not the lecturers' fault that they do not balance the number of male-authored texts with the number of feminist literary texts in the undergraduate English curriculum, but it has all to do with the socialisation process. However, female lecturer D said:

I just want to be honest with you; I do not like the feminist ideologies that are inherent in these texts. So, I deliberately leave such texts out. I don't like some of their ideas that are too radical. Look at what Nyasha in ***Nervous Conditions*** *does to her father; it's totally unacceptable in our Shona culture, the trio girls in* ***So Long A Letter,*** *smoking and Aissotou walking out of marriage, Adah in* ***Second Class Citizen*** *does the same, what is that real? What do these authors want to teach us, even the students themselves? Yes, their ideas are noble but at times they are too radical.*

The lecturer did not hesitate to show her dislike of the feminist literary texts. She said that she does not support the radical stance that these texts take. She was against the idea of presenting female role models who do not conform to societal expectations. She said such women are a threat to the societal thread that binds families. She did not support women who walk out of their matrimonial homes. She said if all women do that, there would be a lot of chaos in our society, not only here in Zimbabwe, but also in the whole world. So, according to her, the underrepresentation of feminist literary texts in the undergraduate English curriculum is a deliberate ploy to curb feminist ideologies from spreading to society. These are the same lecturers who were supporting feminist ideologies above. However, the transactional reader response theory states that a reader can have different interpretations of the same text depending on the subject under discussion.

This might be indicative of how some lecturers deliberately choose male-authored texts for their male and female students. Since she confessed that she does not like feminist ideologies, obviously she will choose texts that will indoctrinate students, who will consciously or unconsciously develop a male perspective of looking at literary texts. On this issue of prejudicing feminist works against male works, Bressler (2011) laments that, during the

1940s,university professors were males, more frequent than not, female students were trained to read literature as if they were males. This shows the extent to which lecturers can influence their students. However, the liberal feminist theory that was used as a lens to view this study advocates for equality between men and women. There should be fairness in the undergraduate English curriculum. Therefore, the study advocates for a fair representation of literary texts in the English curriculum.

5.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented data that was elicited from lecturers. Their views on the feminist literary texts were the main focus of this chapter. Eight major themes emerged and I presented them thematically, discussing each theme and quotations from what the lecturers said on each of the themes presented. This was done through the lenses of feminist theory in general and liberal feminism in particular and the reader response theory in general and the transactional reader response theory in particular. The reader response theory in general and the transactional reader response theory in particular prompted the contradictions and inconsistences in the lecturers' views on the same texts as has been observed above. Lecturers showed different views on different themes that were discussed. The lecturers' knowledge, experiences, emotions, moods, likes dislikes and age, contributed to how they interpreted the phenomenon under study (Tyson, 2006). Different views were raised and lecturers narrated their stories freely. The feminist and critical paradigms that were adopted gave voice to lecturers, as a result, they advocated for change and transformation in the university undergraduate English curriculum. Through critically engaging these lecturers with the feminist literary texts, the lecturers discovered the importance of these texts and therefore, advocated for more feminist literary texts in the English curriculum. These lecturers have shown that these texts are an eye opener on critical gender issues in Zimbabwe.

The following chapter discusses and analyses students' views on the feminist literary texts.

CHAPTER SIX

STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT WITH FEMINIST LITERARY TEXTS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses data that was elicited from twenty student participants who were taught by the lecturers who were interviewed in chapter five. Although different themes emerged, lecturers' and students' views were influenced by similar factors (These are discussed in chapter seven). This chapter revolves around the themes that emanated from individual and focus group interviews, document analysis (students' assignments) lecture observations and informal conversations.

Two focus groups were interviewed at different times, because their lectures were held at different venues. Each group comprised ten students, five students were interviewed from the same sample and twenty assignments were reviewed. At first, I had not planned to hold individual interviews with students but I discovered during the focus group interviews that, there was need for a follow up with some students, who indicated a preference for further discussion. Informal conversations were held whenever it was convenient to do so. The assignments were given from the three feminist literary texts that were chosen from a list of others which were not feminist texts. The module had twelve literary texts. Only three were feminist literary texts and the other nine were not (see appendix E).

The common questions used in the interviews, and the data obtained from documents (students' assignments) and observations were informed by the critical research questions which guided me in this study. The emerging themes from the elicited data were used sequentially in this presentation. I included quotations to highlight themes which developed from the sources of data I used. I discussed the following themes to answer the critical question; what are students' views on feminist literary texts?

The letters of the alphabet were adopted to identify participants in this chapter.

Student female participant A =S-FA

Student male participant   C=S-MC

Students' views on feminist literary texts were catalogued as follows:

- Reversal of roles
- Voice of the voiceless women
- Socialisation/patriarchy
- Entrapment of women
- Portrayal of women and men
- Representation of feminist literary texts in the university undergraduate English curriculum

6.2 Findings

In this chapter, inconsistences and contradictions in students' views feature in some parts of the discussions. The views were recorded verbatim and were analysed through the liberal and transactional reader response lenses. As a female researcher, pursuing a feminist agenda, at times my analysis may show some subjectivity. "…since we bring our subjectivities, our personalities, our predispositions and our quirks to the study" (Sipe & Ghiso, 1994, pp.482-483).

What follows is a discussion on the theme of reversal of roles.

6.2.1 Reversal of roles

Reversal of roles is one theme that came out during my engagement with students. It was referred to by students as; when women and men exchange their roles in the home. Women will be playing men's roles and vice versa. These roles are played according to how they are constructed by society. For example, when men do household chores and women go to work and bring in income or fend for the children in the presence of the father figure. Some students however acknowledged that, male and female roles were socially constructed. In their arguments, they affirmed that if roles were socially constructed, then anyone in the home can do anything depending on the capability of that individual, without taking his/her sex into consideration. Maphaha (1996) found that socialisation has got to do with the manner in which societies inculcate norms and beliefs of their own to individuals and assign

roles which have nothing to do with their capabilities. The students gave examples from the feminist literary texts they were studying. The literary texts show that women can do what men can do. The students observed that there was evidence of reversal of roles in the texts. Below are their views on reversal of roles during focus group interviews:

> In **Second Class Citizen,** *Adah works and brings money home; she looks after Francis, her husband, Francis' mother and the children. What's wrong with the woman bringing food? Men have been made to believe that they are the ones who have to bring money home and care for both wife and children. We need to break this tradition. These authors are showing the reality of life. We should not be talking about reversal of roles here, who accords these roles? We should talk about what men and women are capable of doing in their families. Who does what? I think that is what important* **(F- SA)**.

Female student A's argument was that there is no need for society to prescribe roles to individuals at all. In fact, an individual should do what she/he is capable of doing. The example that she gave from the text points to that effect. Adah, a woman in **Second Class Citizen** is the one who is working and is capable of looking after the entire family. She provides for the family whilst the husband is idle. The student accepted this position. If Adah can do it, then she should. She argued that we should not be talking about roles because it is society which drives these constructs. She critised the process of prescribing roles to individuals according to gender.

On the issue of capability, liberal feminists argue that society excludes women on the basis of the false belief that women are, by nature, less capable than men and do not share the same rational nature as men (Beasley, 1999).This was female student A's argument, that society decides who is capable of doing what and who is not. Liberal feminists argue that, women are as capable as men, so society should not look down upon women because they lack capability. The above excerpt shows that it is Adah who is taking care of the family and not Francis as society expects. Many feminists have lamented that women have been excluded from spheres of life because society feels that women by nature cannot do anything outside the home. Literature reviewed from Africa has shown that women have been looked down upon in society because of the second class status that has been accorded to them by society. Therefore, they have the potential to do better than men if   society gives them the chance to

showcase themselves. It is unfortunate that women have been marginalised in different discourses in different societies and the literary canon is one of them. The literary canon has historically been a male preserve. Women have since joined men and have published their literary texts and in these texts, important gender issues are addressed. This study advocates for a change of the status quo in the undergraduate English curriculum. Through engaging students, the study hoped to conscientise them on the importance of works written by women. It is in these texts that women's roles are shown as social constructs. These texts debunk the myth of female inferiority, hence their   importance to the English curriculum.

In their literary texts, the feminist authors have shown that women can work   and become bread winners as well. The main reason why Female student A blamed society for ascribing roles is because African culture instils in men a false sense of superiority (Kambarami, 2006). In this case, Francis is not the bread winner but African tradition would want to see him fending for the family, when in actual fact, he is not capable of doing that. That is why the female student participant talked about who should be doing what without consideration of gender.

Female student A continued with her argument. She argued that, it is society that socialises men and women to roles according to gender. It is not about women not being capable of working outside the home or about men being capable. She continued:

> *The feminist authors are presenting something different from what society expects. The woman takes over the man's roles and what happens? The man gets frustrated because he has been taught that he should be the one working outside the home and if he fails to do his duty, he beats the woman. This is what is happening in **Second Class Citizen.** Francis has failed to prove that he is the provider of the family and to prove that he has power over the woman, he resorts to violence to show that he has power over the woman. Is this fair? The authors are showing the evil practices of patriarchy through Francis.*

Female participant A talked about the important issue that feminist authors present. She said the authors present a different ideology that society is not familiar with. This is something a patriarchal society like Zimbabwe would turn a blind eye to. The society is not comfortable with such reversal of roles. She observed that Francis turns a blind eye to Adah's efforts of

fending for the family. In fact, Francis is frustrated to the extent that he beats Adah who is doing a good job. Anna Wheeler, one of the first feminist writers in the nineteenth century writes in '*A Plea for Women*' that 'for a married woman, her home becomes a prison house.' Francis beats Adah no matter how good Adah is to him; her home becomes a prison. Stanko (1990, p.57) states that "women stay within battering situations because of the real conditions of their lives within a male-dominated world. Men's power is not individual, but a collective one." The participant looked at the unfairness of the practice; however, she blamed patriarchy for the unequal power relations between men and women. She seemed not to blame Francis for his violent behaviour against Adah but she blamed patriarchal ideologies that render women useless in front of men. On blaming patriarchy, Stanko (1990) indicates that men's power is a collective one, which shows that this is acceptable in society and seen as normal. Literature reviewed has also shown that the Zimbabwean Shona society accepts the battering of wives by husbands as was revealed by police reports. (This was discussed in Chapter two of this thesis).

Female participant A felt that men should appreciate what women do in their families, because they are capable of taking care of the families in their presence as in the case of Adah. The participant thought that women need to be appreciated because they always work hard for the progress of their families but according to her, most men do not appreciate this.

The above argument shows how women are psychologically, economically and physically oppressed by men. Adah is beaten by Francis although she is the one who puts food on the table. Patriarchy is a political-social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and others are deemed weak, especially females, and that they are endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence (http://Imagine No Borders.org). Francis uses Adah's income recklessly on beer and women. Adah is powerless; she cannot do anything about it because she is a woman. She makes effort to provide for Francis' needs but he does not appreciate this.

Male student C had this to say concerning Francis' behaviour towards his wife:

> *In fact, Francis should appreciate his wife's efforts. Let's talk about complementarity here .Let's stop talking about reversal of roles. Once we talk about reversal of roles then we are supporting patriarchy. Women and men should complement each other.*

What Adah is doing is complementing what Francis can't do. I don't know why Francis beats Adah when she is doing a good job. Look at what patriarchy does to individuals. Francis can't think properly because patriarchal ideologies are engraved in him. I would like to see my wife bringing money home and as a couple, share responsibilities, what's wrong with that? (**M-S C**).

Male participant C talked about complementarity. He believes that in a family, men and women or husband and wife rather, should complement each other. He expressed the view that men and women should help each other in taking care of the material needs of the family. He showed that he was not comfortable with talking about reversal of roles. To him, when people talk about reversal of roles, they will be supporting women's oppression and he was very much against that. He thinks that, tradition makes men stop thinking constructively just as what Francis does in *Second Class Citizen.* He showed that he liked the idea of women working outside the home because he also wants to see his wife   putting food on the table.

His tone showed that he was disappointed with men like Francis in society, men who are still deep-rooted in traditional practices in this era of feminism. Francis's behaviour seems to be shaped by his socialisation. When he grew up, he always witnessed his father beating his mother, so he thinks wife battering is acceptable but his wife leaves him alone. Stanko (1990:93) asserts that, "Many women do leave violent husbands. In doing so, many women leave, return, leave again, return again, and leave never to return." In this case, Adah never returned. Both Francis and his mother are left destitute because it was Adah who was taking care of their material needs. When Adah leaves Francis' family destitute, Emecheta is showing that, women are as capable as men in looking after families. Adah is a professional and is capable of taking care of Francis and he depended on her. Feminism postulates that women have been prevented from participating in male professions and institutions. The reason being that, women are viewed as less capable than men (Crossman, 2009). Adah beats Francis at everything, thereby proving that the privileging of males is erroneous.

This therefore might mean that the authors through their literary texts seem to be showing the world that women are oppressed and are not given the chance to prove to society who they are. Once they are given the opportunity, women are capable of working for the progress of their families, just as what Adah does in *Second Class Citizen*. Emecheta seems to say only men such as Francis would not appreciate women's capabilities, because patriarchy is a social

system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to women and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak. They also have to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence (Abbey, 2011). However, liberal feminism further assumes that, the re-education of the public concerning the sex role socialisation process is a means towards achieving more liberated and egalitarian gender relations (Carroll, 1984).

Commenting on Francis, male participant D showed that he was disappointed by men like Francis:

> *Francis becomes a total failure because he does not provide for the family and does not show Adah love as the bible says. He is a failure and does not fit in this society; he fails to look after his mother, wife and children. Men are worried about their positions. What is special about these positions? Francis is offended because he is losing his position to Adah, that's why he resorts to beating Adah. Francis represents African men who are male chauvinists and taking advantage of women. The title prepares us for some type of conflict, and has given the women a reawakening. It is society which transcribes roles and this is just a social construct and there can be a reversal of these roles (***M*-SD).**

Male student D described Francis as a total failure in life because he has failed to perform his role as a man. He has observed that Francis is lazy. He condemned Francis for being violent to Adah who is working hard and providing material needs for the family. He has also observed that men are worried about their status in society and he is surprised by that. The male student showed disappointment in African men who take advantage of women in society; he called these men male chauvinists. When he talked about this society, the participant was referring to the Zimbabwean society where men are expected to be bread winners. He might also be referring to modern society where feminism and equality are in vogue. He thought Francis is misplaced somehow. He has observed that Francis is an epitome of African culture. Male student D encouraged women to stand up and fight for their rights because he talked about a reawakening. He said that women should know that, the idea of roles is just a social construct and this can be reversed. Social feminists argue that, these myths of roles are part of a powerful socialising influence upon women that leads them to define their major role as that of 'mother, housekeeper and child-rearer.'

Therefore, the feminist writers destroy the discourses that pathologise African men as patriarchal by nature. They show that patriarchy is a social construction that one can outgrow, never believe in and work to destroy. Francis could have outgrown patriarchal ideologies since he was operating in an environment where a lot of women go to work and equality is practised. The participants, both female and male showed that patriarchy can be fought since it is a social construct.

However, male student F seemed to sympathise with Francis:

> *Francis is a frustrated man, it hurts his ego, his wife reminds him of his failure, he is bothered by that, that's why he attacks his wife, and his wife reminds him of his failure as a husband and a father and a son, so his anger is directed to the wife. We are not socialised to be looked after by women, no man will allow that. Anyway, Emecheta is saying women can do better than men. If men can accept this reversal of roles, how can you be a man if you are not a bread winner? Society shapes our perspectives. Socialisation influences the way we behave, you can't be a man if you are not a bread winner. Emecheta is targeting society because it is society that moulds individuals. From the texts, it is evident that women can do better than men. Although Adah is doing very well but Francis as a man is hurt. I really understand Francis' frustrations* **(M-SF).**

Male student F sympathised with men like Francis. He explained how he would feel as a man if he was not working. However, he blamed society which shapes individual perceptions. According to him, it is society which gave men the role of being bread winners and when Francis fails, it hurts him and he feels threatened by his wife.

Male student F had an interesting argument, so, I had to make a follow up of his argument in the interview, where he could express his ideas freely. This is what he said:

> *As long as we share responsibilities and I remain the leader of the house, I have no problems with that; women should consult men for advice. I agree that there is no individuality in a family, and a family is like a partnership and all partners should be active, even long back that was the situation. The issue of feminism is neither here nor there. Feminism talks about power sharing and power distribution. One should be responsible as a mother, wife or daughter, everyone according to his/her ability. It should not be an issue of power but what you bring home as a husband or wife.*

*Emecheta fails to realise that there are men who suffer under other men. In **Nervous** **conditions**, Jeremiah and Takesure always do what Babamukuru wants them to do because he provides for the family. They have no say in anything in the home. Adah oppresses Francis. Emecheta has given masculinity to Adah and feminity to Francis, this is queer and this is not normal in an African setting. She has condemned all men. This is not good for our society* (**M-SF).**

Male student F stated that the authors are giving masculinity to women and femininity to men. He was against that for he thought this did not reflect an African setting. The other issue that he castigated is Emecheta's condemning of all men. On the issue of the male student F blaming Emecheta for her negative portrayal of men, literature reviewed has shown that teachers play a very crucial role in reinforcing societal beliefs, values and norms. Studies by Al-Ghafari (1999) and Morojele (2009) posit that, the school is a vehicle for the transmission of societal beliefs, norms and values. On the same issue, Singh (1998) observed that school readers are chosen by authorities to guide pupils into 'acceptable social role.' The male participant is a student teacher, who also chooses readers for his students. He might also have challenges in choosing readers which are gender sensitive. The male participant might consciously or unconsciously choose readers that might guide pupils into acceptable roles as suggested by Morejele, Al-Ghafari and Singh's studies.

I had individual interviews to follow up on the issue of reversal of roles. This is what female student A said:

Women are estranged. It's the women who work in the feminists literary texts that we are studying and men enjoying the sweat of women. Women work harder than men, in ***Nervous conditions,*** *Mai Tambu works hard for the family while Jeremiah enjoys women and his beer. He is not significant in the home as a provider. He is not man enough to repair his thatched hut but Mai Tambu does it with Lucia. This should be done by men. Tambu waters the garden even when Nhamo is at home. The men in the home do not work; they do not do their roles as is expected by society but they let the women do men's roles*.

The female participant registered her sentiments by giving examples in the texts where men do not do anything in the home and women do everything. She believed that, the roles that are given to women and men by society are not given according to capability but according to sex. Most of the roles given to women oppress and exploit them. The participant gave Mai

Tambu as an example, who does everything including the chores that are expected to be done by men. She said there is no need to ascribe roles according to gender because Mai Tambu is doing what is supposed to be done by Jeremiah, according to African standards. She has observed that men in the feminist literary texts they were studying do not perform their roles as expected by society but they make women suffer by carrying all the family burdens and at the end of the day, the praises go to men. In *Nervous Conditions,* Babamukuru is praised for taking care of the extended family, when in actual fact it is Maiguru's hard work that makes it possible for Babamukuru to provide for the extended family.

The subordinated roles that these women are given make them suffer whilst men enjoy themselves as in the case of Jeremiah in *Nervous Conditions,* Francis in *Second Class Citizen* and Samba in *So Long A Letter*. In the case of the texts under study, the authors give their female characters male roles to show that women are capable of taking care of their families even in the absence of the male figure. The authors deliberately present reversal of roles to bring out their concerns that, women suffer whilst men enjoy the privileges of being male in a patriarchal society. So, why does society ascribe roles to individuals when women are capable of doing what men can do? Chitando (2011) posits that society ascribes roles to men and women in society in order to give women a subordinate position in society. For example, women are expected to stay at home, cook, wash and take care of children and the husband, whilst men are expected to work outside the home and become bread winners.

In another feminist text, *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker, Sophia, a female character climbs the ladder to mend a leaking roof, she also goes to hunt, whilst her husband Harpo, remains in the home washing dishes and taking care of the children. By giving women such roles, the feminist authors seem to be showing society that the roles they give to men and women may not mean anything. What is important is to let individuals do what they are capable of doing without taking their sex into consideration.

Male student F echoed female student A's sentiments on how women are treated by men despite their hard work.

> *If one is a product of patriarchy, he thinks he owns a woman, a typical product of patriarchy thinks that whatever the woman brings home is his and whatever the woman does at home, it's him. Francis and Babamukuru are in tandem with the*

patriarchal culture. Francis is not grateful for what Ada does to the family and even to him. She brings food to the house but he does not work. She pays for his fees. He fails to understand where his bread is buttered. Adah brings food to the table and even if Francis does not provide for the family, he remains the head of the family. Patriarchy preaches that the man should be the provider of the family but here, there is a reversal of roles, Adah becomes the bread winner whilst Francis is a passive recipient .There is nothing wrong with that because the two should be complementary. And Adah is doing it perfectly well. Tradition states that the men should provide for the family. This is wrong because women can do that as well. That is why we advocate for women emancipation.

The student participant has observed that patriarchy has done more harm than good to both men and women. He stated that women suffer at the hands of patriarchy. He gave an example of how Adah works hard to sustain the family but Francis, the husband is more concerned with assuming the headship position than fending for the family. His observation was that men are concerned about their positions in the family because of masculine vanity and chauvinistic assumptions. In the case of Francis, he brings nothing home but he wants his power to be felt by the woman who sustains his living. This might be because in most societies, men are cast into the role of hyper agent. They are expected to assume positions of power in the family. This is an expectation of their gender role they have to fulfil lest they be seen as 'not a man' and thus become worthless to their families.

Male student F also supported the idea of complementarity as has been mentioned by Male-Student C above. The participant also brought up the idea of a subservient position, which is why Adah keeps on working hard and respecting Francis because society expects her to do so. Women stay within abusive situations because of the real conditions of their existence within a male-dominated world (Stanko, 1990). He also disagreed with the view that men only should provide for the family. He thought these traditional beliefs should be stopped for they oppress women. Liberal feminists advocate for equality because they believe that women are oppressed because of the position they are accorded in society.

Chitando (2011) concurs with male participant F's sentiments that society assigns roles to women and men in society. Her argument is that society has already pre-determined roles even before an individual is born. Boys and girls are indoctrinated into traditional roles, and

when the individual is born, he/she just fits onto that role. The society is not worried about what the individual is capable of doing but what has been ascribed for that individual.

To augment the interviews, I looked at students' assignment to find out their views on reversal of roles. Below were responses from students to the following question they were given:

Women can change society in a positive way if they are given the opportunity. To what extent do you agree with this assertion?

In response to the following assignment topic on the issue of role reversal pertaining to males and females, most students showed that generally, women are more hard-working than men. The house chores are very burdensome, and any woman who can overcome these burdens, obviously will excel outside the home. In one of the assignments, a male student gave an example of Adah in *Second Class Citizen* who is disadvantaged from an early age but manages to rise above expectations, at school, work, and family and even in society. While the men expected defeat, she proved her worthiness. In a reversal of roles, Francis becomes the 'woman' of the house whilst Adah goes out to work for the family.

This is contrary to societal expectations. A woman is expected to stay at home and look after children. Buchi seems to be showing society that women should also be given the opportunity to showcase their capabilities. Through Adah, in *Second Class Citizen,* the author shows that women are capable of working outside and in the home as well and this has a positive impact on the development of society. After studying these feminist literary texts, it becomes very clear that women in these literary texts contribute a lot to the development of their families although men in these texts seem not to recognise that. This might also apply to women in the Zimbabwean setting.

Female student A commented on how Mai Tambu in *Nervous Conditions* works tirelessly for her family. She wrote:

In our Zimbabwean society, we do not expect women to thatch huts, it is the man's job but in this case, the job is being done by a woman. Mai Tambu does not thatch the house only, but also clears the land and works very hard in the field. Jeremiah should be doing this job but he is lazy and incapable, so Mai Tambu does it all. This reversal of roles that Emecheta is presenting is totally unacceptable in our society. Although this is not acceptable, she has

*managed to conscientise society that women are not second class citizens but are as good as men and in some cases, even better than men. She seems to be saying; all the praises go to men when in actual fact, it is the woman who is working. In **Nervous Conditions**, the praises for thatching the hut goes to Jeremiah, and also Babamukuru is praised for taking care of the extended family when it is Maiguru's salary that enables him to look after Jeremiah's family. The feminist author is bringing out the truth of what happens in families and not what the society wants to see happening.*

In another essay, female student H argued that:

The feminist authors are also concerned with questioning men on whether they are doing their roles to the best of their ability, in a changing world, where the cultural belief of the man as a bread winner, has ceased to be relevant. With the advent of feminism, the woman too goes to work and brings income to the family.

In another essay, male student G wrote:

Patriarchy concerns itself with the fact that men have the financial stamina and should be bread winners. Feminism, however disputes that. Feminists believe that women too can go and work outside the home and become bread winners, therefore, to achieve equality, role reversal is inevitable. Men should be taught that there is no job that is prescribed for men or for women. The question is who is capable of doing what? This is very important. The women in the literary texts have proved that they are more capable than men. Why can't we change the status quo? I think this should start with us university students.

The students based their arguments on the literary texts they were studying where females performed male roles. The texts show that the idea of roles according to gender is only a social construct (Butler, 1990) but women and men can do the same jobs. The student participants also expressed that it is society that prescribes roles to individuals. Morojele's (2009) study suggests that parents and teachers perceived division of chores and responsibilities along gender lines as a result of a divine intervention. In other words, they perceived the division of human attributes into masculine and feminine as a heavenly intervention from God meant to regulate how human species must operate/relate.

On the same issue, Gordon (2000) shows that the textbooks also play a big role in perpetuating the exposure of Zimbabwean pupils to gender stereotypes. In a study of 42 primary school textbooks used in Zimbabwe, it was observed that the books show that, the father is the provider and takes important decisions. The mother is confined to housework, cleaning, cooking and looking after the children and the husband and no other roles are acknowledged. This shows how gender roles are perpetuated within the school setting.

During informal conversations with some male students, they showed that they had mixed feelings on the theme of reversal of roles. They seemed to be confused, or they were going by traditional standards and at the same time, conforming to feminist ideologies. One male student said it was good for a woman to work outside the home. He said it would not make sense for a woman after attaining her first degree to stay at home, give birth and care for her children and husband. These days the woman has to find employment and look for a helper in the home. She should go out to work and bring money home. He showed that there was nothing wrong with that. He was against the idea of assigning roles to women and men. In fact, he blamed patriarchy for putting restrictions on women. On the other hand, he said it was also culturally appropriate for the woman to stay at home and look after children. He thought that the more time the woman spends away from home, the more she neglects her duties as a wife and a mother.

> *I think the woman should be able to work outside the home if she has the capability. Adah is capable that is why she works outside the home. And she is doing it very well. If she attains a degree, it would not make sense for that woman to use her education to care of the family. It would be unfair. Asi vakadziwo futi vakaita zvekuenda kubasa vanozokanganwa basa ravo futi (Translated, it means If women are given the opportunity to work outside the home, they will forget their duties* **(M-SJ)**

The student showed mixed feelings on the issue. His view was that women should work outside the home as long as she is able to perform her feminine duties at home. He was more worried about the duties she has to perform at home than her going to work outside the home. Perhaps he felt the wife would not be able to cook and wash for him because all these duties would be done by the helper. At first, he condemned the whole idea of assigning roles but he talked about the woman's duties in the home. Male student J works with female colleagues but still he felt that their place should be in the kitchen. His contradictory views on the

reversal of roles could be influenced by his socialisation; he acknowledges on one hand that women should be allowed to work outside the home but on the other, he wants them to perform their feminine roles as prescribed by society. On his contradictory views, the reader response theory that was adopted in this study points out that an individual can bring his background and experiences to the text. This affects the reader on how she/he might interpret the text. This might be that student J was socialised into believing in men and women's roles. However, the liberal feminist theory that was used as a lens to view this study, advocates for the change of the status quo. According to liberal feminists, the idea of ascribing roles to gender categories makes women to remain in inferior positions.

Male student B thought it was a good idea that everyone in the home does something, whether it is cleaning the house, washing dishes, caring for the children or going outside to work. He thought that people should not be forced to do duties according to their sex but according to what they want to do. He disagreed with male student J who mentioned that it is the duty of the woman to take care of the family. He said he is an example of a man who is good at household chores including taking care of the children. He said he does this much better than his wife and in most cases he is the one who does household chores. The student saw nothing wrong with that. He thought women should be given the freedom to choose what they want to do in life. He said it was high time people stopped talking about roles according to sex.

> *Izvi zvekuti basa iri rinofanirwa kuitwa nemurume kana kuti nemukadzi zvinodzvanyirira madzimai.Mumba munofanirwa kungoti anogona izvi ndiye oita.Ini kumba kwangu mabasa amunoti ndeechikadzi ndinoita ini kutokunda mudzimai wangu (Translated it means, there should be no ascribed roles in the home because it is just a way of oppressing women, at home I do all the domestic chores that are supposed to be done by women. I do it better than my wife* (**M-SB**)*.

The student observed that the idea of allocating duties is a way of oppressing women because in most cases, it is the woman who does most of the work in the home. In *Nervous Conditions,* Mai Tambu suffers the burdens of being a woman. She bears children, takes care of them and the husband as well. In fact, she does everything at home. At the end of the day, it is the husband who benefits. Marxist feminists argue that the family system is characteristic of modern capitalistic societies. The men benefit because they tend to dominate positions of

power and influence in the family. The woman is forced or socialised into unpaid domestic labour and is forced or socialised into responsibility for child-rearing. This benefits men because women perform an unpaid "domestic servant" role for all men (www.sociology.org.uk 2005). Stratton (1994, p.67) questions, "If men are so sure of their powers, why do they go to such lengths to discriminate against women who are their life-long and inseparable companions?"

During the conversation, the male students showed that they are caught up between the idea of ascribed roles and the oppressive patriarchal system that insists on these roles. They showed that they also hold on to cultural practices, though some of them were totally against the idea of men and women roles. However, their views showed that they accepted feminist ideologies.

The feminist ideologies they accepted are the voices of the voiceless women in society. Most students observed that the authors are voicing out the voice of voiceless women in different societies.

Below is a discussion of the voice of the voiceless women.

6.2.2 The voice of voiceless women

It is the politics of society that needs to be shifted to accord women a voice. This was a comment from one of the students' assignments.

Women writing Africa is a collection of different voices from different African women writers. It brings together the voice of African women readers around the globe. It is a collection of writings from different women writers from the Southern region. They put their voices together so that they can be heard in their attempt to address gender issues. Through writing, these women are quite hopeful that their voices are going to be heard globally. Bressler (2011) posits that, feminists believe that men either consciously or unconsciously have oppressed women, allowing them little or no voice in the political, social and economic issues of their society. By not giving voice and value to women's opinions, responses and writings, men have suppressed the female, defined what it means to be feminine, and thereby devoiced, devalued and trivialised what it means to be a woman. At the heart of feminism, is the belief that women's voices should be heard, that they should represent themselves, put forward their own view of the world and achieve autonomy in their lives. Feminism seeks to

empower women and give them a voice to articulate their experiences of gender oppression (Cohen, Manion, &Morrison, 2011).

Student participants expressed the above sentiments during individual, focus group discussions; informal conversations as well as in their assignments. Most of them argued that women do not have the voice to articulate their grievances because society teaches them to keep quiet and endure. Many women suffer in marriages and carry their own burdens because they are not allowed to speak. According to Tambu in *Nervous Conditions,* women should only be seen and not heard. She was referring to the situation at her own home where she said women's opinions were never listened to. Egejuru and Ketu (1997, p. 115) argued "…the larger world of African men in which there was no validity in what women thought and said." This is an African belief that 'women should be seen and not heard.' This means those women's views are never listened to, therefore silencing the woman's voice. Tambu complains about the silenced women's voices in her family. Nadine Gordimer in *Women of South Africa* expounds that, South African women were not capable of having any part in any decisions. Therefore, their voices were marginalised. Liberal feminists, therefore argue that society thinks that women are not capable because they are not given the chance to prove their capabilities. Therefore, society excludes the women's voice in decision making. Stratton (1994) argues that, if women are men's life long and inseparable companions, then why do they not listen to their voices and why do they give them an inferior position in the family?

The silencing of the woman's voice is also evident in Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood,* (a feminist literary text outside this study)Nnu Ego, the female protagonist remains silent in her marriage because she is the senior wife and is not supposed to talk about her problems. However, women have refused to be silenced. The voices of the voiceless women come through female protagonists not only in these three texts but also in other feminist literary texts outside this study. Examples of such texts are, Alice Walker's *The Color Purple (1982),* Chimamanda's *The Purple Hibiscus (2003)*, Neshani's *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu (2001)*, Vera's *Under the Tongue (1996)* and many more. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Kambili, Chimamanda's female protagonist is a voiceless, petrified young girl who is completely loyal to her father. She then finds voice and she begins to talk. These authors pivot their narratives on women, tracing their oppression from a young age. They have given their female characters the voices to articulate their concerns.

Other examples of defiant African women who refused to be silenced are Winnie Mandela of South Africa, who stood her ground during apartheid. Mbuya Nehanda of Zimbabwe refused to be silenced during the Chimurenga war until she was executed. There are many examples; I have just cited a few examples. The two above mentioned heroines are just like these feminist authors, who refuse to be silenced and they are now speaking for other voiceless women in different societies.

Student participants thought that these feminist authors are presenting the voice of the many voiceless women in different societies. They have used the pen to show women's situations in many African societies. The participants believe that, it is only through such literature that women's voices would be listened to and studying such literature is inevitable. They argued that women have been oppressed since time immemorial; it is high time they started speaking and this is what they are doing through their literature. They felt that the marginalisation of feminist literary texts in the university is a way of suppressing the woman's voice. They blamed lecturers for this because they are the ones who choose literature set books for their students. So, leaving out such texts means silencing the woman's voice. Their sentiment is supported by Chitando (2011) who contends that the feminist writings echo the voices of the voiceless African women, where previously the discipline was dominated by men's voices and visions; they have radically altered the face of the discipline and women's voices and experiences have become an integral part of African literature.

Below are participants' views on the voice of the voiceless women. These views emerged during focus group discussions:

> *In Vera's literary text, **Under the tongue,** she says there is a rock under my tongue. She cannot speak, she has been denied the voice to talk and then she talks about this rock under her tongue. Women do not explain their issues in a straight line. I am not being male chauvinistic here but I am trying to explain that, it might be the way they have been brought up, they have been denied the voice to speak because society demands that a woman should be seen and not heard and for me as a scholar, it is her strategy to explain something. She seems to be saying, how can I speak when circumstances surrounding my sex do not allow me to do that? It is a complex message, being sent in a complicated manner* **(M-SG).**

Female participant H further added that:

> *If Vera says under my tongue there is a rock, the image that is being portrayed is that, she has been denied voice, she cannot explain fluently because there are some prohibitions to what she has to say, she is strained as a woman by culture not to freely say what she wants to say. The tongue is a river flowing with a lot of things. The metaphorical picture she is showing means a lot* **(F-SH).**

Another female participant I also added:

> *Then, she has so many things to say but because she has no voice. This explains why feminist writers write in a complicated manner, that's why their stories are not linear, though we do have authors like Emecheta, Ba and Dangarembga who write in a linear manner but their stories are a bit complicated. This seems to be from the culture they come from, where women should not be heard but seen. Their stories become complicated in the sense that they tackle very sensitive issues in society, especially their portrayal of women and men contest patriarchal ideologies in Zimbabwe. Now that women have been given the voice, let them speak* **(F-SI).**

The three student participants above showed that women cannot speak in a society that is male-dominated. The idea of a Zimbabwean feminist writer, Yvonne Vera (who was not included in their module) talking about a rock under her tongue, is indicative of the prohibitions that women are subjected to in patriarchal societies. According to these participants, women have a lot to tell the world, but they cannot do it unless the rock that is under the tongue has been removed. Female student H said the rock is a metaphorical expression of women's oppression. The woman is oppressed to the extent that she is not given the platform to articulate her problems. She said once this rock is removed, the woman will be able to speak out. Vera suggests that women need to be emancipated and their emancipation should come from society. The critical paradigm aspects which were embedded in this study are transformation and emancipation (Weaver and Olson, 2006, p. 460).The participant talked about emancipation, this will only come if the women's voices are heard in society. The feminist literary texts the students were studying speak for the many voiceless women in Africa. There is need therefore to transform the undergraduate English curriculum by adding more feminist voices. The English curriculum reflects that the feminist voice is marginalised. Transformation in society can start with these university students, so there is a

need to add more feminist voices in their curriculum. The feminist paradigm like the critical paradigm advocates for emancipation and transformation.

The other issue that was brought out by female student I was that, women do not write their story in a linear way because of the many restrictions that are imposed upon them by society. Female student I was referring to issues that should be articulated by women in their texts. They should reflect 'womanish' characteristics. The language also should be acceptable for public consumption. Alice Walker's **Color Purple** was very controversial because the language was not acceptable. Toni Morrison's presentation of her female character, Sula in **Sula** was criticised by the public. The female student thought that feminist writings reflect that women are not in a stable position in society.

Charlotte Bronte's **The Madwoman** portrays a female character, Bertha, who has been denied the ability to speak; she will never get to tell her own story. Women are not allowed to speak and this shows the extent to which their voices are oppressed and suppressed. Male student J had this to say:

> *The oppression and suppression of women has been there since time immemorial, when people knew that a work of art was written by a woman, they would not read it and it was not allowed for public consumption. When women discovered that they were not allowed to speak, they had to hide behind men but once the book was published, it won a Nobel Prize. It is very ironic that a literary text that was said not fit for public consumption; the same text would win a Nobel Prize, once it had a male name* **(M-SJ).**

Male student J registered his sentiments on how women's writings were looked down upon and how their works were not allowed to be published for public consumption. It was ironic however, that once these texts were published under pseudonyms, they won Nobel Prizes. The question is, was it to do with the writings or who wrote the texts? It seems that, the gender of the individual who wrote the text was more important than the issues that were explored in the texts. However, women managed their way through to the publishing house and now their works are published and their voices are presented in their literary texts. However, it was not easy for them.(This was discussed in detail in chapter two).Nfah-Abbey(1997,p.148) posits that these women writers have beaten and are still beating their

drums and are letting their war-cries be heard side by side with those of their counterparts at home and abroad.

> *Now, that these literary texts are being published, it is imperative that they be included in both the high school and university curricula. The voice of the woman should now be heard loud and clear. I want to pursue an argument that the underrepresentation of these texts in the curricula is a deliberate move to silence the women's voices. I say so because one of my colleagues here mentioned that their ideologies are dangerous to society* **(F-SL).**

Female student L stated that, the marginalisation of feminist literary texts in their English curriculum is a way of ignoring women's voices. She also suggested that these feminist literary texts should also be included at high school level. The female student mentioned that because one of her male colleagues had mentioned that these feminist ideologies are dangerous. Therefore, she assumed that some male and female lecturers had the same feelings, so they deliberately exclude these feminist literary texts in the university undergraduate English curriculum.

Her suggestion of feminist literary texts being introduced at high school might be that, these students should be familiar with these feminist ideologies when they are still young, hence the saying' catch them young.' Once the voice of the woman is heard in all institutions of learning, it will be easy to re-socialise women and men in different societies. These texts are an eye opener to everyone regardless of gender.

Female student N echoed the same sentiments:

> *These texts are an eye opener to both males and females, so pretending that the women's voices are not being heard or that their voices are not there is doing injustice to the cause of the women's struggle. The only noble way of voicing out the voices of the many silent African women is to use pen and paper like what these authors have done. Women are fighting through paper and pen and for this battle to be won, there is need to study their works at higher institutions of learning*.

The female student thought that, the only way to let women's voices be heard is to use the pen. So, these voices would be heard through studying feminist literature in higher institutions of learning. Her other concern was that, society should not ignore women's voices because women are fighting for recognition and if their voices are suppressed, then they will remain oppressed. Liberal feminists believe that women are oppressed in society because of their gender, so there is need to fight for recognition by engaging men and women in discussions. The other way these women are fighting to be recognised and to be heard is through writing and from these writings men will hear the woman's voice. These university students have heard the voice of women through these feminist literary texts, which is why they are advocating for more texts in their English curriculum. This should not be at their university only, but also in other universities and high schools. They hope that change can start with institutions of learning.

By fighting for recognition, women also fight male domination. Adah does this many times in **Second Class Citizen,** she stands up to her husband and when he puts her down, she uses her intelligence to find ways around her husband's behaviour.

This is a struggle indeed and the reason why feminist authors use women to narrate their stories is due to the fact that their writings represent women's voices. This is what male student J said concerning women's voices:

> *Through using women to narrate, the three authors, Bâ, Emecheta and Dangarembga are voicing out the voices of the many oppressed women in Africa at large and in Zimbabwe in particular. It would have defeated the whole purpose if the three authors had used male characters to voice out women's problems. It is only women who can articulate women's problems. Giving a man a woman's voice is like asking a man about labour pains* **(M-SJ).**

Male participant J's argument was that, no man can represent a woman's problems. The analogy of labour pains indicates that it is practically impossible for men to know what women are going through. Only women are able to describe labour pains and therefore, only women are able to present their predicament. That is the reason why the three feminist authors used women to express women's problems. The participant pointed out that the

feminist authors echo the many problems African women encounter in their different societies.

During individual interviews, the participants displayed the same views. Male participant S had this to say:

> *From high school, we were familiarised to male-authored texts, where women were portrayed as evil, incapable and less intelligent than men. These authors have brought a new dimension in African literature where women have been given a voice to say, look at what the society is doing to us. Are we evil? Are we incapable? Are we weak? In fact their voices have shown that men are the ones who are weak and are full of incapabilities. Look at Francis in* **Second Class Citizen** *and Jeremiah in* **Nervous Conditions.** *They are useless* **(M-SS)**.

Male student T echoed the same sentiments:

> *Now that women have the platform to voice out their concerns, let them speak to the world. Women have suffered enough, it is high time their concerns be taken into consideration, they have spoken and they are still speaking*.

The students were confirming what was already said by their colleagues. Male student T showed that the texts they were exposed to are those texts which portray women in a negative way. The authors have successfully shown that women should speak and if they do not, no one is going to speak for them. He thought women should utilise the opportunity they have by publishing more feminist texts where women's problems are articulated. He observed that these authors brought a new dimension to African literature, where the woman's voice can be heard. Andy confessed that at high school, they were exposed to male-authored texts, where such a strong woman's voice was never heard.

The male student was referring to the type of literature he studied at high school. These are the type of texts that he was referring to in the above excerpt, and that is why he said these feminist authors have brought a new dimension in literature. In those male-authored texts, the woman's voice is silent, if it was ever there. Feminist writings echo the voices of the voiceless African women, where previously the discipline was dominated by men's voices and visions; they have radically altered the face of the discipline (Wisker, 2000). Chitando

(2011) argues that, women's voices and experiences have become an integral part of African literature.The above male student stated that the woman's voice has been quiet for a long time, so women should speak now through writing. He encouraged women to keep on speaking until their voices are heard.

The same sentiments were also echoed by some female participants during informal conversations. Most conversations were held in their indigenous language because they felt comfortable expressing their feelings in their own language:

> *I think its high time women woke up and start fighting. Izvi zvanyanya veduwe, vakadzi vanzwa nekutambudzwa mudzimba umu saka tikaramba takanyarara tichingoti tradition (Translated; this is too much, women have suffered enough in these homes in the name of keeping our tradition), we will continue to suffer silently if we keep quiet). Look at how women in the text are suffering; women should speak. We thank these feminist authors for their writings, at least they are representing our voices* (**F-SP**).

Female student P registered her sentiments on how women continue to suffer silently because they cannot speak. She felt enough was enough; women's problems should be attended to now. She asserted that women suffer silently because they want to preserve tradition, but if women keep following traditional beliefs, then their emancipation would be far from being achieved. Participant P believed that women should speak; keeping silent means traditional practices would continue haunting them. She also referred to how women in the feminist literary texts suffered because they had no platform to speak.

African women have a tendency of not wanting to separate themselves from traditional practices. They believe in keeping a good name in society. That is why they do not voice their problems. The feminist authors seem to conscientise these African women on what tradition is doing to them, whether one is educated or not, tradition still catches up with them somehow. Some educated female characters in the texts suffer silently because of tradition, examples are, Ramatoulaye in *So Long A Letter* and Maiguru in *Nervous Conditions*. The authors are giving them alternatives to follow so as to lift themselves out of the bog of tradition.

> *Ehe, zvakaoma veduwe, chero isu takadzidza kudai, tichishanda, zvinongonzi nyarara nekuti uri munhu mukadzi, saka tofira kuti tiri vanhukadzi isu takangosikwa tese nemwari zvakafanana? (Translated; yes, this is too much, even as educated as we are, we are silenced because of our sex, but God created us being equal (**F-SR**).*

 Female student R lamented that even educated women like herself find themselves entrapped in tradition. She said that socialisation teaches that, as a woman, one is not allowed to say anything concerning marital challenges. She argued that God created women and men as equals but because of their sex, women are denied a voice to speak. She believes God never created women to suffer but men take advantage of the bible to silence women.

In first Corinthians 14 verse 34 and verse 35, Paul speaks about how women should keep quiet in church and ask their husbands at home if they did not understand anything at church. Tino blamed people who use the bible to silence women. Her argument was that God never created men and women differently but men are taking advantage of the bible to suppress women's voices. When Paul said women should ask their husbands at home, it implies that women are not allowed to speak in public just because society does not allow them to do so. This was the same scenario in the history of women's writings; their works were considered not suitable for the public. Therefore, the woman's voice is silenced in every sphere of life.

> *Aiwazve iwe (Translated, no, my friend), the bible is the originator of women's oppression. Paul even teaches that women should keep quiet in church and ask their husbands at home. So you see how complicated the matter is.Saka (translated, so) we should make use of these texts that are voicing out the voices of the silenced women in society (**F-SI**).*

Female student I thought a woman's suffering was God's plan. She even argued that, it was God's plan to let women be ruled by men. She gave Paul's example when he advises women to keep quiet in church. She strongly believed that the bible is the source of women's oppression. She advised that the only salvation of women lies in the feminist literary texts. She has observed that it is only in these texts that women's voices can be expressed and heard.

The student has shown that the bible is used to silence women. Zimbabwe is a Christian country (Kambarami, 2006); so many men take advantage of Christian ideologies to silence

women. Wisker (2006) contends that, apart from being silenced, the responses show that the act of writing 'places the black women outside acceptable cultural spaces where their voices should only be heard in the domestic arena.'

> *This silencing starts from home, unonzwa zvonzi munhukadzi haabvumirwi kungotaura taura Nhamo dzemumba unofumuka .Hanzi unofanirwa kuziva zvekubikira mhuri.(Translated, it means a woman is not allowed to talk about her problems, you lose respect, a woman's place is in the kitchen).The same applies to church, women are not allowed to stand in front of men even to preach. They are silenced, the same applies to school, because the girl child has been socialised to keep quiet. In school, she will just keep quiet even if she knows the answer. And at the end of the day, she is said to be less intelligent than the boy, when it is society that has inculcated that belief* **(F-SK).**

Female student K blamed the family, church and the school for the socialisation that takes place in these institutions. These three were identified by female student K as the sources of the suppression of women's voices in different societies. She believes the three reinforce traditional practices. She argued that because the girl-child is silenced at home and church, this affects her performance at school because she is socialised not to speak in public. On the other hand, boys would be more active in class than girls and at the end of the day; girls would be labelled as passive and dull. Hence, it is society that taught the girl to be silent in public.

Therefore, the suppression of the woman's voice starts in the home where traditional practices are enforced. The participants seem to suggest that, if women subject themselves to patriarchal ideologies, then they will suffer. Women should also stand up and speak for themselves by expressing their concerns through writing. Alice Walker in an interview said that she believes in listening to young black women' voices, whose rocky road she was still travelling. Walker's works give a voice to those that have no voice, usually, though not always, poor, rural black women. Just to support Walker's claims, Mai Tambu in ***Nervous Conditions*** is a rural black woman who suffers silently. These are the type of women whose voices are presented in Walker's literary works. Feminist women writers voice out women's problems and there is need to see many feminist writers emerging.

Saka tinotofanirwa kutaura, chero isu ngatinyoreiwo ma book on women's problems (We should speak, we should also write books and articles). Even to start from primary school, to give the girl-child a chance to express herself through writing, especially articulating her problems. Otherwise, if we do not empower ourselves we will remain wallowing in the hands of patriarchy. We want the future generation to enjoy the same privileges with men, so let us speak, we refuse to be silenced **(F-SI).**

Female student **I** believed that women should be empowered through writing. She suggested that, the idea of writing should start from primary school. The girl child should be given the chance to speak out her problems through writing. Otherwise, if these girls are not empowered through writing, they will just suffer in silence and their voices would be silenced forever.

Female student **I**'s suggestion that the girl-child should be empowered through writing from primary school might be true to some extent. I give an example of what happened at a certain primary school in Zimbabwe. A female teacher discovered that one of her girl-pupils was being abused by a close male relative when she had given them a composition to write. In that composition, the pupil described how she was being abused. In following up with the pupil, the teacher discovered that it was a true story. The child could not talk about her problem to anyone, but she could put it down on paper. So, when Tina said the girl-child should be empowered from primary school to voice out her concerns, she might be right. Many young girls are abused by close relatives, but they do not have the voice to speak. If they are given the chance to express themselves in writing, this can stop girl- child abuse in many families.

The same sentiments were echoed in the assignments students wrote. The assignment title read; '**Feminist works concern themselves with the depiction of women as the 'significant other' Discuss.**
Female student N wrote:

*One important issue that is prominent in these literary texts is the voice the authors have given to their female protagonists. In **Nervous Conditions,** the story is narrated by Tambu, a girl who has seen it all in her family. It is only through Tambu's eyes that we know about the situation of other female characters in the novel. The voice that she is given by the author*

*makes women in this text, heroines. The women become visible because Tambu has spoken out for them. In **So Long A Letter**, the story is articulated by Ramatoulaye through a long letter to her childhood female friend, Aissotou. She describes the problems other women are going through. Ba has also given her female protagonist a voice to speak up for other women. In **Second Class Citizen**, a ten year old girl narrates the problems of female characters in the text, as young as she is, Ba has given her a voice to voice out the problems of women. This is one important aspect of the feminist literary texts; the feminist authors give their female protagonists voices (Moyana, 2006).*

In another essay, male student F argued that:

*The feminist authors give their female protagonists too much voice. They seem to be exaggerating women's problems and demeaning men. I think if women are given too much freedom to say what they want; this world will be a dangerous place to live. Tambu in **Nervous Conditions** is an example of a dangerous female character in society, because she said she was not sorry when her brother Nhamo died.*

Although male student F had negative feelings towards the portrayal of Tambu's character, most students' views on this theme showed that they sympathised with women. They showed that women for quite a long time have been denied the voice to speak. They made a break through into the literary canon which was a preserve for males only. Now that they have succeeded in entering this profession, they can now speak for the voiceless many women in Sub-Saharan Africa. Many African women are suffering silently at the hands of patriarchy. These feminist authors are daring in the way they articulate women's problems, the males in the literary texts feel that they are being challenged. Reference is given to men like Babamukuru, Jeremiah, Nhamo and Francis in the texts under study. These men are engrained in tradition such that their treatment of women is not acceptable. Most students however, condemned such men mentioning that they retard women's emancipation.

One of the student participants mentioned that change should start at institutions of higher learning such as universities. If these university students are exposed to the right curricula, then they will be able to change society in a positive way. To support this view, literature reviewed showed that institutions of higher learning should develop curricula that empower

students by helping them to develop attitudes that will enable them to become effective social change agents (Shabalala, 2009).

Martin (2000) laments that, although the number of women has increased in academic circles, their voices, especially feminist voices are silenced because of the patriarchal culture in universities that is replicated rather than transformed. The undergraduate English curriculum at the university under study reflects an inadequate representation of feminist literary texts. Therefore, the study hoped to establish through lecturers' and students' views why the situation is like that.

The participants have shown that women's voices are silenced in society. Therefore they encouraged women to speak and not to let patriarchal practices silence them. They felt it was good for women to also articulate their problems through writing like what the three authors have done. They advocated for more writings of this nature.

Socialisation/patriarchy also came out as a theme during the engagement with students.

6.2.3 Socialisation/Patriarchy

Patriarchy and socialisation have been used together in this section because it is difficult to differentiate patriarchy from socialisation. So, to avoid repetition of ideas, the two are discussed simultaneously.

Socialisation/patriarchy emerged during engagement with students. Socialisation has been defined by student participants as the teachings of norms, values and beliefs of society and patriarchy has been referred to as male-dominance. During the socialisation process, boys are taught to behave like boys and girls to behave like girls. These teachings are according to patriarchal ideologies. It is during this process that gender roles are ascribed to individuals. Some student participants blamed society, the family, the school and the church for the socialisation of individuals. They argued that, the socialisation that girls and boys go through determines their roles in society. Some student participants thought that this process disadvantages girls most. The boys are given power to dominate women. In Zimbabwe, the boy is taught as early as three that "uri baba vemusha iwe, unofanirwa kuita semurume."(Translated, it means you are the head of the family, so you must behave like a man).It is from this tender age that the boy is initiated into patriarchal practices.

In the texts under study, many men have this influence to the extent that they exploit and oppress women. In the literature reviewed, Ralfe (2011) argues that society determines the position, what is considered acceptable behaviour, and what the expectations are, of its male and female members. Morojele (2009) found that the school, family and religion play an important role in reinforcing gender socialisation. Literature reviewed has also shown that, in Zimbabwe, men are socialised to look at themselves as breadwinners and heads of households whilst females are taught to be docile and passive housekeepers (Chitando, 2011).As soon as a girl reaches adolescence, all teachings/socialisations are focused towards pleasing one's future husband as well as being a gentle subservient and obedient wife (Mtekwe & Mtekwe, 2014; Kambarami, 2006). These teachings foster a reliance syndrome, where meaning is defined in relation to the significant other, the males.

The transactional reader response theory facilitated partipants' expressions of their feelings towards patriarchy and socialisation.

The following views came out during focus group interviews:

> *Men's behaviour is due to socialisation from society, even from the mothers themselves; they inculcate societal values and norms from a tender age. The mother spends most of the time with children, the boys are socialised to behave like boys and girls to behave like girls. In most cases, girls are taught to respect boys, no matter how young the boy is. The girl is taught to respect the boy, so both take this* into *adulthood. The boy becomes the boss and the girl in a subservient position* **(M-SB).**

The male student blamed women for the way they socialise boys and girls. In other words, the student thought women themselves reinforce patriarchal values in both girls and boys. They are the ones who spend most of the time with children at home; therefore, they reinforce patriarchal values in their children consciously and unconsciously. Cheryl Jonson in **Third World Women and the Politics Of Feminism** (1991, p.326) advises that "We must discontinue reproducing our own oppression in the ways we treat one another, in the ways we raise our children." Cheryl's views were echoed by male student B, above that women are equally culpable for reinforcing patriarchal practices by the way they socialise their children. Barbra Leigh Smith, a writer in the seventeenth century remarked that a woman does not yet

deserve a better lot than a man gives her. She praised an exquisite type of gentleness, tenderness, possibly maternity of a woman. Mrs Gaskell, author of **Ruth** (1853) and **North and South** (1855), also dismissed the very notion of training women as doctors. She said she would not trust a mouse to a woman. This shows how women look down upon themselves. This was during the seventeenth century. Even in this twentieth first century, this idea of women looking down upon their own type is echoed in these twentieth first century writers. Steady (1985) in Mohanty, Russo and Torres (1991, p.321) states that; "Rather than seeing men as the universal oppressors, women will also be seen as partners in oppression and as having the potential of becoming primary oppressors themselves." Aunty Nabou in **So Long A Letter** does not see the need for women's education. To her, a woman should learn to be submissive to her husband and nothing more than that. Tambu's mother in **Nervous Conditions** sees no need for Tambu's education. Male student B bemoaned such type of negativity from women. His argument was that, women are the ones who perpetuate patriarchal ideas during socialisation. If women have such negative thoughts about themselves, then obviously they will impact these ideas onto their children.

> *Yes, it's true that patriarchal values are reinforced in the home. Look at what* Nhamo *in* **Nervous Conditions** *does to the girls in his family. Nhamo is socialised into believing that he is superior to the girls, the girls had to go and fetch his bags from the bus stop. When Netsai refuses to fetch Nhamo's luggage she is beaten for not being submissive to Nhamo. He makes the girls work for him. Nhamo is just like his father, Jeremiah, who spends most of his time on beer and women and letting his wife and the girls suffer doing all the chores at home. Girls and boys should be taught to respect each other; there should be fairness at all costs* **(M-SM).**

Female participant N added:

> *Patriarchy is a generational thing. Francis was brought up in a violent environment and he carries on with the abuse, a generation where men will continue to abuse their wives, the son is going to do that also, so patriarchy is passed on from one generation to another. Just like Nhamo's example that was given by my colleague that he takes after his father on laziness and abusing women* **(F-SN)**.

Female participant P reiterated:

*Society is to blame for Francis' behaviour, it is abuse from generation to generation, it's all to do with socialisation, if men are socialised to respect women they will do. In **Nervous Conditions,** when Nyasha comes home late, her Father is angry with her but when Chido comes late; all is well because he is a boy. So, socialisation plays an important role in the moulding of individuals and the attitude that an individual develops towards the other gender. Francis sees her mother being beaten by his father, and thinks that women should be treated thus, then, when he marries he also beats his wife* **(F-SP).**

The participants have shown that the whole process of socialisation disadvantages girls. The girls are taught to be submissive to any male figure whether younger than the girl or older. Nhamo is younger than Tambu but he treats her like the young girls at home. The students felt that the socialisation process is a way of oppressing women. However, they blamed patriarchy for men's behaviour towards women. They believed that the attitudes these boys and girls develop during the socialisation process are the same attitudes that manifest in them as they grow into adulthood. This might be the reason why men treat their wives as minors in marriage, instead of treating their wives as equal partners. The students observed that the whole process of socialisation oppresses women and advantages men. They felt that the patriarchal ideologies that are inherent in many African societies place   women in the lowest class in society. The students stated that they were not happy with the situation of women in society.

The main point that these participants seemed to be making was that, the socialisation process is a generational thing; it moves from one generation to the other. Parents do reinforce patriarchal ideologies consciously or unconsciously. When Francis's father beats his wife, he is not aware that his own son will also do the same to his wife. When Jeremiah tells Tambu that 'she cannot cook books' for her husband, Nhamo does the same to Tambu, which is why he steals Tambu's maize cobs. He becomes an obstacle to Tambu's ambitions and that is the reason why Tambu did not feel sorry when Nhamo died. *"I was not sorry when my brother died"* **(Dangarembga, p.1)**.This points to the fact that the way girls and boys are socialised can create enmity between them. This was the type of relationship that existed between Nhamo and Tambu because of the way they were socialised. So, this idea of enforcing patriarchal ideologies onto boys and girls can be really destructive, whether this is done

consciously or unconsciously. There is need for re-socialisation and re-education of society as has been alluded to by some student participants.

> *Patriarchy is engrained in men, there is need to re-educate society. Men should be educated so that they realise that women can contribute to the betterment of their societies, it's a mammoth task but there is need for re-socialisation. There is need for patriarchal ideologies to be erased from men's minds. But with these feminist ideologies coming up, I think men will realise the need for a re-education, although it's going to be an uphill struggle* **(M-ST).**

Female participant I supported the above view:

> *There is a conflict between socialisation and praxis. Women can do better than men, there is conflict because what we believe and what happens is different. As we can see that the women in the novels are doing far better than men. In the fight, Nhamo is beaten by Tambu. Intellectually, Francis and Nhamo do not match the women. As for Jeremiah, he is not capable of doing anything as a man. So, if society accords weak positions to women, it is missing a point somehow. That is why there is need for a re-socialisation and re-education of society. The values that have been taught to men and women should be untaught*.

The student participants felt that men are enjoying the privileges of being males in their communities. Be it at home, school and even at church, men enjoy the power that has been bestowed upon them by society. The participants observed that patriarchal ideologies that are inherent in almost every African society compromise the woman's situation in Africa. They argued that, even women themselves have been socialised to look down upon themselves and as a result, end up suffering from an inferiority complex. They felt that, the situation is made worse because men think that the power they have has divine authority.

The blame is put on Eve when she was deceived by the snake in the Garden of Eden. People argue that, that is why God gave the woman an inferior position on earth. Kambarami (2006) explains that, patriarchal attitudes are also found in Christianity and these have been further aggravated by the fact that the woman (Eve) was created from the rib taken from men (Adam). This story that surrounds the creation of humanity has made women occupy a

subordinate position in the Church and in the family as well. The women believe this and also accept subordinate positions because most women are religious. Customary practices have been incorporated into religion (Kambarami, 2006). Consequently, women are socialised to accept their fate religiously.

Chitando (2011) argues that, patriarchy has sought to project women's subordinate status as normal and permanent. Alternatively, feminist writers and critics have exposed patriarchal myths that place men at the center of reality. Public statements glorifying women's roles as mothers and wives have socialised women to stay home and raise children rather than enter the workforce or seek more training. Men were socialised into believing that women cannot do anything outside the home. Liberal feminism locates the origins of women's oppression in women's lack of equal civil rights and equal opportunities as well as in past tradition and learned psychology associated with the sex role socialisation process (Baehr, 2013).

There is a need to re-socialise these men in order for them to change their negativity towards women's capabilities of working beyond the kitchen walls. There is real need for social transformation. The feminist theory critically recognises the need to engage men in the (re)construction of society (Crossman, 2006).

Female participant R thought that:

> *Although men need to change their way of thinking towards women and a re-education is inevitable, but if they feel that danger is coming through this literature, then there is going to be trouble, men will resist*.

Female participant R had the view that if men feel that their positions are under threat, they will resist this re-education and re-socialisation. The socialisation process has given men superior positions and because they have authoritarian positions in society, they feel threatened if the status quo is changed. Therefore, the process of re-socialisation might make men resist. However, she insisted that men need to change their perceptions towards women.

From the students' observations, the whole process of re-socialisation needs co-operation from both parties. The problem is that, if men are left in the re-socialisation process, then the purpose for the struggle for women's emancipation will be defeated. The socialisation process should be untaught in both men and women, together; women's emancipation will be achieved.

In the assignment question they were given; **Do you blame the socialisation process for what happens to both male and female characters in the literary texts?** Some students had these views in regard to this, a female student participant observed that:

*The type of socialisation that is being done is biased towards men. Feminism questions and seeks to address the way of thinking, and the socialisation that is done presents women as insignificant in society. In **Nervous Conditions**, there is a violent argument between Babamukuru and Nyasha when Nyasha comes home late. Babamukuru accuses Nyasha of immoral behaviour. This is the type of socialisation that is meant to make women subjects of men. Women are even protected by men, making them insignificant and irresponsible for themselves. Dangarembga presents women as people who are ever downtrodden by men as is the tradition* **(F-SH)**

In another essay, responding to the same question, male student E wrote:

*Babamukuru is to blame for Nyasha's behaviour. He is responsible because it was him who took Nyasha to England. And she is socialised in the European way which is quite different from the African way. Babamukuru forgets that Nyasha was brought up in a different environment from African girls. He wants Nyasha to behave like Tambu. This is not possible. Nyasha does not understand this because his brother Chido comes home any time he feels like. Her argument is that, they are treated unfairly, She is aware that the way she is treated is different from the way Chido is treated. Tradition has restrictions on girls, they cannot go out any time but boys can. The unfortunate part is that, the girls these days do not want to be tied to tradition. In **So Long A Letter**, the trio would not listen to their mother telling them not to go out late, stop smoking and wear trousers but the girls refuse to be socialised in that way. To them, this type of socialisation impinges upon their freedom. So, they continue to do what they want.*

The students' arguments presented the view that the socialisation that is given to boys and girls shows unfairness. Girls are more restricted than boys. This type of socialisation that the

girl-child goes through makes her docile even in adulthood. She has been socialised into believing that a woman should always be under the control of a man. In their marriages, these women suffer silently because they have been taught to do that. Their lives revolve around men. They feel they are protected as long as they have men around them, which is a false consciousness according to Marxist thinking. The boy on the other hand is free to do what he wants. He also has the freedom to control women's behaviour even in marriage.

In response to the same issue of socialisation, in their assignments, most students showed that re-socialisation is necessary and very important in their patriarchal communities. They argued that the reason why most women would remain repressed is because of the socialisation they went through. They gave examples of the female characters in the literary texts, who suffer because of the way they were socialised. 'They can't speak because they were taught to keep quiet, they can't cry out because they were taught to remain silent; they can't stand up because they were taught to sit down.' Students thought that both women and men were entrapped. They showed that something must be done urgently to save women from the evil practices of tradition. However, some had different views on socialisation.
Male student **S** wrote:

The idea of socialising boys and girls in different ways is a way of bringing sanity to our societies. He said if women were not restricted in any way, how would we survive in such a society? Women doing whatever they want, leaving children home alone without any one attending to them or monitoring them. What type of children would come out of such a situation? If we talk about equality as these feminists are advocating for, who will be the leaders and who will be lead?

The lecturer's comment on this was; who is responsible for looking after the children, are you giving women that responsibility? Are you also giving men leading positions, are you not being male chauvinistic here?

The female lecturer's response to the student's argument shows that the lecturer was against the student's view of giving women the responsibility of taking care of children. Her remark on male chauvinism shows that she was totally against the argument advanced by the student. She is the same lecturer who castigated men strongly in chapter five of this thesis. However,

the student's argument on the way women and men should be socialised leaves a lot to be desired.

Female student **A** further reiterated on the argument on socialisation:

> *If everyone was equal in our societies, where will order come from? Imagine a situation where everyone is a commander. I would rather advocate for the maintenance of the status quo for progress sake. Just imagine a society where women are not taught respect and good behaviour. What will that society look like? And a society where men are not taught to rule their households with wisdom, where will it take us to? Yes, we can talk about patriarchy being oppressive to women but I think, it helps to maintain order. Women and men should be socialised into different roles. The feminist authors can be conscientising the world but I think it's too far-fetched. Some of their ideas are too extreme. I cannot imagine myself living in a world where everyone is equal. Even God gave Adam authority to look after Eve and the animals. So, if God did, then who are we to change this? There are certain issues that I agree with these feminist authors but I think at times, their ideas are just extreme. This idea of socialising men and women in different ways is good in the sense that, there is no discord in our societies; everyone knows where she/he is supposed to be. Men and women do not encroach in each other's lanes.*

The student argued that if we all become equal as feminists are advocating, then we will be heading for disaster. She thought the idea of everyone being equal is utopian. The student showed that she also wanted equality but she felt it was not possible. For her, fighting patriarchy is an uphill struggle that is why she advocated for the maintenance of the status quo. If the female characters in the feminist literary texts had developed this attitude, Tambu, Adah and Lucia would not have succeeded in furthering their ambitions. The feminist authors deliberately created the type of women they want to see in African societies, strong women who have the determination to succeed in life.

Therefore, these women refuse to be entrapped in traditional practices.

6.2.4 Entrapment of women and men

My story is not after all about death but about...my mother's and Maiguru's entrapment (**Dangarembga, 1988, p.1**).

Entrapment of women is an unfortunate situation in society; both women and men become helpless because of traditional practices. Entrapment is mostly seen in women because they are the ones who suffer under the oppression of men. Yes, men are entrapped but their entrapment cannot be equated to that of women. Men are entrapped because they have to conform to traditional practices. Even in some cases where men are supposed to use their discretion, they are caught up in their quest to fulfil roles as leaders in their families, organisations, societies, countries and the world at large.

During focus group discussions, students felt that women are entrapped because of societal norms, beliefs and values. Any woman who does not conform to societal expectations becomes a deviant and as a result, becomes a social outcast. Anowa, Ama Ata Aidoo's female character in *Anowa* defies her parents' role of choosing a husband for her. Instead, she chooses her own husband, thereby breaking a relationship with her parents. She is taken as an outcast. "It is clear from the reaction of her parents that Anowa has completely stepped outside the line of convention, her marriage marks her out as an outsider" (Egejuru&Katarak,1997,pp.24-25). Society seems to be hard on women who defy societal norms, values and beliefs. The complete negative response of society points to enclosed cultures which cannot accept an assertive woman.

As for men, although they are entrapped, their situation is different. They are expected to monitor their wives' and girls' behaviours so that these women do not break societal rules. The participants felt that this is unfair and something must be done urgently.

In most cases, women wish to keep a good name in society and at the same time yearn to be independent, they are entrapped. They are just like a bird in a cage, which would want to stay in the cage for safety but at the same time, wants to fly out to freedom.

The reason why there are more widows in society than widowers is because any woman who once experienced the harsh conditions of entrapment in marriage would not want to be re-

married after the husband's death. As for men, they would re-marry immediately after the death of the wife. These were some of the observations which were made by some student participants especially during follow up conversations.

The following views came out during focus group interviews; male student T had this to say on entrapment:

> *The title echoes messages to the reader. Emecheta shows us that we should not be entrapped by tradition, Francis is rigid, and he becomes a second class citizen. She indirectly shows us through Francis that most African men are entrapped by tradition. Besides Francis being in London, he sticks to his patriarchal ideologies. He comes into contact with other men who respect their wives but he holds on to tradition. His behaviour in London is barbaric. Adah changes but Francis remains rooted in patriarchy. He is entrapped.*

Male student T said that Emecheta is making a call to all males to disentangle themselves from traditional practices. He gave an example of Francis in *Second Class Citizen* who has been in London, where he sees women and men go out to work every day, and where men respect women. He fails to change because he is stuck in tradition to the extent that he does not see anything wrong with bashing Adah. Tradition at home has taught him that women should be beaten. The participant's tone showed anger towards Francis. He seemed disappointed in him because he has failed to change his behaviour even amongst the most civilised people in England. The student thought Emecheta is blaming all men who behave like Francis, who still follow traditional ways of treating women. He, however exonerates Francis by showing that he is entrapped. Perhaps the reason why Francis is stuck onto tradition is because he suffers an inferiority complex because Adah beats him continually on everything. He thinks that the only way to gain his position in the house is to impose himself on his hard-working wife. On wife battering (Stanko, 1985) asserts that, women's vulnerability to intimidating and violent male behaviour is due to their social position in society. From the student's views, most African men are in Francis's situation are entrapped:

> *It's true Francis is entrapped just like all of us in Zimbabwe. He is oppressive, he thinks women should suffer, he feels happy when he sees them suffer. Emecheta portrays a typical African man, oppressive and uncaring. She tells the truth about African men who are entrapped in tradition* (**M-SC**).

Male student C is just echoing what has been said and is emphasising the point that men are entrapped in their tradition. He seems to be saying that, if patriarchy is engrained in men like it is in Francis, then men need a re-socialisation. The other point he made is that, the author seems to be telling the truth about the entrapment of African men in tradition. This was further supported by a female student:

> *The other problem that I see is, whether these men are educated or not, they are all entrapped. Babamukuru as educated as he is, becomes the epitome of patriarchy. He is very oppressive to Maiguru. I would not expect Babamukuru to be hostile towards Maiguru. The way he controls her and takes her salary shows that Babamukuru, with their education, they are both entrapped* (**F-SA**).

The female student was confirming what others were saying about men who are entrapped in cultural practices. The students have shown that it is not women only who are entrapped but men are also.

The students brought out an interesting point. Usually, when scholars are analysing feminist texts, they talk about women's entrapment. These students have also shown that the way men operate in society is also a form of entrapment. As a result, it is not only women who are entrapped but men as well. It is only that women's entrapment is more conspicuous than men's. They cannot make decisions for fear of the consequences of the choices they would have made. These women find themselves caged. As for men, their entrapment enslaves them because they are expected to rule over the woman even in unwarranted situations. The cases of Francis and Babamukuru are typical examples of how these men become entrapped. They abuse their wives not because they want to but because they want to fulfil societal expectations.

When I analysed these feminist literary texts at masters' level, I never took into consideration the entrapment of men. It was through my engagement with these university students that I learnt about the entrapment of men. They referred to the entrapment of Francis in ***Second Class Citizen***, Babamukuru in ***Nervous Conditions*** and Modou in ***So Long A Letter.*** From the discussions, it was implied that men can make choices whether to remain entrapped or to come out of it. They mentioned that Francis could have easily come out of entrapment because he was in London far away from Africa. Babamukuru could have changed when he

was in London and Modou through the education he had acquired. However, these men choose to remain entrapped. As for women, they mentioned that it is difficult to escape from entrapment.

However, the feminist authors have shown in their literary texts that, it is possible for women to escape this entrapment by emancipating themselves. The authors have managed to show this through their female characters who managed to emancipate themselves from traditional practices.

> *Aissotou in **So Long A Letter** does not want to remain entrapped by tradition by staying in an abusive and loveless marriage. She strips herself from Mawdo's name and walks out on him and takes her children with her. So, does Adah in **Second Class Citizen.** Maiguru in **Nervous Conditions** knows she is entrapped but she is helpless, she does not know what to do. She runs away but she finds herself in the hands of another patriarchal figure and decides to come back to her oppressive husband. She remains entrapped* **(F-SH).**

Female student H looked at two situations in which women can find themselves in. Adah and Aissotou have made bold decisions to walk out of their matrimonial homes. These women are prepared to suffer the consequences of their decisions. A traditional African woman is not expected to walk out of marriage but these two women are daring and decide to free themselves from patriarchal bondage. Maiguru on the other hand, remains entrapped just like a bird in a cage, she wants to fly out of the cage but at the same time, she is afraid of the consequences she might face, so she decides to remain caged. Antako (1985) asserts that women remain in abusive marriages because they lack self-confidence.

The feminist authors seem to be giving women alternatives, whether to remain entrapped and suffer in the name of preserving tradition or to walk out of abusive relationships and become independent like Aissotou and Adah in **So Long A Letter** and **Second Class Citizen,** respectively. The authors seem to say that as long as women remain entrapped in tradition, their suffering will not end.

> *Ramatoulaye in **So Long A Letter**, though educated, sticks to tradition. She suffers in her oppressive marriage, doing everything whilst her husband chases after young*

girls. She confesses to her childhood friend that it is tradition that stops her from moving away from her husband (**F-SP**).

Female student P was referring to situations women find themselves in. Most women know that they are entrapped but because they want to keep a good name in society, they would rather suffer. She gave an example of Ramatoulaye who knows that she is in an abusive and loveless marriage but she would rather remain in that marriage. Tradition respects married women, so she would rather be respected than liberate herself from traditional bondage. The student showed that Ramatoulaye confesses to her childhood friend that she is suffering but there is nothing she can do; she is tied by tradition and endures in her loveless marriage.

The student participant seemed to state that tradition has a strong hold on some women in society. Just like what she expressed above that many women are entrapped like Ramatoulaye, who openly tells her friend that; *I respect the choice of liberated women, I have never conceived of happiness outside marriage* (**Bâ, 1980, p. 56).**The feminist authors seem to be exposing the situation of many married African women. They are entrapped. The student thought that, there is nothing that Ramatoulaye could do to fly out of the cage, but can only remain caged for the rest of her life. Society expects her to endure in marriage. In **The Joys of Motherhood,** (a feminist literary text outside this study) Nnu Ego is forced to marry a man she detests because tradition expects her to have children; not only children but male children.

During individual interviews, student participants registered sentiments that both men and women in their societies are entrapped in cultural practices just like men and women in the literary texts they were studying. The students thought that this entrapment is not something that can be easily shaken off, it needs a lot of effort from individuals. In other words, the student participants were talking about re-socialisation and re-education of society. They also had the opinion that if the process of re-socialisation takes place, then women will be emancipated from their oppressed positions in society. However, one male student showed that the process of re-socialisation is going to take long. He encouraged women to speed up this process because if they let men take the lead, this might take centuries before the re-socialisation process takes place.

> *Re-socialisation is not something that can take place over a night. It is a process that needs co-operation from both parties. Women should take the lead because they are the ones who are directly affected* **(M-SM)**.

Liberal feminists work with both men and women, quite often in formal pressure group type of organisations and quite often aiming their tactics at changes in legislation. Liberal feminism works within the structure of mainstream society to integrate women into that structure (Abbey, 2011). Male student M's suggestion that women and men should be incorporated in the re-socialisation process is advocated for by liberal feminists. Liberal feminists believe in negotiation between the two parties. In other words, men and women should come together to end women oppression. It was through engaging these students with the feminist literary texts that they advocated for more texts in the undergraduate English curriculum. Therefore, advocating for more literary texts in the curriculum means advocating for equality between men and women.

The student seemed to be saying that women should be more involved in the re-socialisation process than men because women suffer more than men in this entrapment.

In a follow up conversation (informal conversation) that I had with a group of male and female students, they expressed that both males and females in society were entrapped. Students expressed the views in their indigenous language.

> *Asi imi munoti varume vangaita sei ivo vakangowanawo zviripo.Saka munoda kuti vachinje zvinhu zvakasikwa na Mwari? (Translated, it means, what do you want men to do? This was created by God). Patriarchy has been there since* time *immemorial. The men in the texts are just doing what they are expected to do by society* **(F-SR).**

The female student sympathised with men. She thought that men were helpless in this situation because the woman's condition has been like that since creation. She thought the condition of women in society was God ordained. She even expressed that patriarchy is not something new but it is something that has been there since creation, so, she felt that men cannot change the woman's situation. The student felt that the status quo be maintained because God created women in subordinate positions. The student was referring to the book of Corinthians in the bible which states that women should be submissive to their husbands. As a result, both men and women remain entrapped because they follow biblical teachings.

In Morojele's (2009) study, parents believed that the subordinate condition of women has divine sanction. This female student thought likewise. However, feminists believe that God did not create women to suffer but men are taking advantage of the fact that it was Eve who was the originator of sin, so women are said to be weak, and men should always control them. Although the student participant observed that men are entrapped, she also felt that they can do away with this entrapment if they wish to do so but feminists believe that men enjoy exploiting and oppressing women that is why they want to remain entrapped.

The conversations were characterised by debates like the ones that have already been discussed above. The debates lead to discussions of the portrayal of women and men characters in the literary texts.

6.2.5 Portrayal of women and men

The portrayal of men and women was a major concern to students. The portrayal of characters was viewed by students as when the authors create their own ideal person. In most cases; the authors create characters that carry their own messages to the different societies.

During the course of the focus group interviews, most students showed that the authors gave female characters more attention than men. In their portrayal of characters, some students felt that women were portrayed positively and men negatively. However, others had the view that it was not negative portrayal of male characters but it was a projection of reality. Some students mentioned that these authors are bringing in a new phenomenon to literature. The portrayal of men in male-authored texts had been over-glorified and women were portrayed in a demeaning manner. The student participants argued that, because women have found the platform to express themselves, people think that they are portraying men in a negative way. Students observed that this new literature has brought a new dimension in the world of literature. They noticed that the portrayal of women has changed significantly from the way women were portrayed in male-authored texts. Women were portrayed as weak (Chindedza, 2012). Now women are portrayed in the feminist literary texts as intelligent, and defy societal norms, values and beliefs to set themselves free from patriarchal bondage (Chindedza, 2012).

The following were students' views on the portrayal of men and women in the texts:

I feel that Francis is a caricature; there are no men like that in our African society. Emecheta is an extremist; there is too much dosage of patriarchy in Francis. Emecheta has presented Francis as inhuman. This is demeaning to the men species. I don't believe we have men like Francis in our society (M-SS).

Male student S blamed Emecheta for creating a character like Francis. He is not convinced that there can be men like Francis in the African setting. Francis depends on Adah's income, and according to the student S's opinion, an African man is not supposed to depend on a woman's income, but in this case, the feminist authors have shown that it is possible. The student thought that it does not make sense that Ada takes care of Francis and even sends him to school. He thought that the author was exaggerating on Francis 'character. The student in fact displayed an angry tone towards Emecheta which is why he said she is an extremist. The other reason why the student thought it is an exaggeration might be because men were never portrayed in such a manner. For Gaidzanwa (2011), this reveals the patriarchal bias in most works by male authors. This had the effect of encouraging women writers to take up the challenge to write, to counter such patriarchal biases. Men are not comfortable with such portrayal of males. Male student B had this to say:

Emecheta fails to realise that there are men who suffer. Adah oppresses Francis. She has given masculinity to Adah and feminity to Francis, this is queer and this is not normal in an African setting. She has condemned all men; she seems to be saying all females are suffering because of men when in actual fact it's not true. Adah forces herself into marriage. Some men suffer just like what women do. I agree that Emecheta is exaggerating her portrayal of male characters **(M-SB)**.

According to these student participants, a man is expected to behave in a certain manner that shows that he is a real man in an African setting. They blamed Emecheta for giving Adah male roles and Francis female roles but Emecheta seems to be showing that, these roles are socially constructed (Butler, 1990) and can be reversed. Several male critics have objected to Emecheta's derogatory portrayal of their gender (Stratton, 1994).

According to these feminist authors, it is each individual according to her capabilities and not according to what society expects them to do. Women in these feminist literary texts work harder than men but men do not recognise their efforts.

> *On the other hand, Dangarembga in **Nervous Conditions** manages to show us how women work hard but nobody appreciates their work. These female characters work just like men. Maiguru is as educated as her husband, they hold the same qualifications. Mai Tambu though not educated works hard to fend for the family. But men in the texts do not appreciate the work that these women are doing. They need re-socialisation and re-education* **(F-SK)**.

Female student K was juxtaposing female and male characters in the way the author presents them. She observed that women are presented in the text as more hard-working than men. Maiguru holds the same qualifications as her husband. She works very hard as is expected of her by society. She is presented as an intelligent hard-working woman though her husband does not acknowledge this. On the other hand, she cited Mai Tambu who is also hard-working, though not as educated as Maiguru.

According to female student K, the author portrays men who are very oppressive in nature and who do not see anything good in a woman. These men enjoy the sweat of their hard-working wives. The author presents them as men who are engrained in traditional practices. She felt that these are the type of men who need a re-socialisation and re-education.

> *Women are oppressed in every corner of their society, society should appreciate women as they try to uplift their families, but nobody seems to appreciate them* **(F-SL)**

Female Student L was echoing the above sentiments that women are oppressed. The female student participant has registered her sentiments that the most disheartening thing is that, men pretend not to notice.

The author has presented her female characters as being oppressed while the male characters are presented as oppressors. Women in these literary texts are oppressed no matter how hard they work for their families. The authors have deliberately created their women characters in order to show how women suffer at the hands of patriarchy. On the other hand, their male characters represent the type of men who do not recognise that women are also human beings. The authors, in their effort to show what traditional practices do to women, present

women who defy all odds to emancipate themselves from patriarchal bondage and also women who can be hardened by situations.

> *Tambu was not sorry when her brother Nhamo died because Nhamo was an impingement to her educational ambitions. As a boy, Nhamo was given the privilege to go to school. When Nhamo dies, Tambu sees an opportunity to pursue her ambitions. If the father had not disadvantaged Tambu, she was going to feel sorry for the death of her brother. To Tambu, the death of a male in the family is the beginning of happiness to females in that family. It is not Tambu's fault that she does not feel sorry, I blame patriarchy* **(F-SN).**

Female student N showed that Nhamo's death came as a rescue to Tambu's problems. The point that the student made was that, under normal circumstances, a sister would be sorry for a brother's death. Tambu has been forced by circumstances to harden her heart. The patriarchal practices that were practised in those days that Dangarembga wrote the text were very harsh to the girl-child. The student sympathised with Tambu; she supported Tambu's behaviour towards Nhamo's death.

In presenting Tambu in *Nervous Conditions*, Dangarembga seems to be conscientising society on the negative effects of patriarchy on women. Tambu developed that hatred for his brother because the system favoured his brother at her own expense. By presenting the characters of Tambu and Nhamo, the author seems to be saying that society should be cautious with the treatment they give to girls and boys. By giving privileges to boys and disadvantaging girls, society will be creating a gulf between the two sexes which will be very difficult to close. The girl becomes aware of this unfair treatment and is prepared to retaliate in any form. Nyasha in *Nervous Conditions* observes that there is unfair treatment between her and her brother, Chido. As a result, Nyasha fights her father to show that she was not happy with the unfair treatment.

> *I support Nyasha's radical stance. Babamukuru pushes women in the house around; Nyasha does not accept that, instead, she fights back her father. Tambu is not stupid, she knows Babamukuru is not doing the right thing, she fights him silently because inwardly, she supports Nyasha's radical stance. She uses Babamukuru to get what she wants. On the other hand, Lucia also uses Babamukuru to get a job at the mission*

*so that she could pursue her educational ambitions. In **Second Class Citizen**, Adah uses Francis to pursue her ambitions (**F-SN**).*

The unfair treatment of girls and boys has been shown by the student as the cause of radicalism in some girls in society. Nyasha in **Nervous Conditions** has observed that the women in the house are being pushed around while her brother enjoys the privilege of being male. Female student N showed that Dangarembga created radicalism in Nyasha because of the treatment she receives from her father. This radical stance that the feminist author gives Nyasha seems to show that if patriarchal practices are extreme in the home, women can react extremely as well.

In Nyasha, Dangarembga has created the type of radicalism that she took when she wrote this text. The issues she explores are very sensitive especially in a patriarchal nation like Zimbabwe. She has created a female character who defies societal norms, values and beliefs in Nyasha, Lucia, Tambudzai and in Maiguru. The radical feminists support these women who defy societal norms, values and beliefs. Nyasha fights back her father, which is totally against African customs. Lucia challenges Babamukuru, Jeremiah and Takesure at the 'dare' (a meeting place for men only in Zimbabwe). Tambudzai refuses to attend her parents' wedding when Babamukuru commanded her to attend. Maiguru at last tells Babamukuru that she was not happy with the way he was treating her.

Female student N has also shown that Dangarembga's female characters take advantage of opportunities when they come their way. Tambu and Lucia respect Babamukuru not because he deserves respect, but because they have discovered that Babamukuru is the only person they can exploit to fulfil their dreams to get the education they yearn for. Dangarembga has created women who are more intelligent than men. Babamukuru does not see that Tambu and Lucia are taking advantage of him. His main worry is his position as the head of the family. When he sees Lucia and Tambu giving him the respect that he thinks he deserves, he becomes so happy that he helps these women to get the education that would emancipate them from the oppressive system. Emecheta has also created such type of a woman in Adah; Adah uses Francis to get what she wants. This shows that these feminist authors create women who are more intelligent than men.

These feminist authors seem to be saying, if you cannot beat the system, then join it to get what you want, like what Tambu and Lucia do in the texts. These authors seem to be showing women alternatives they can take in societies that are male-dominated. On the other hand, these authors create women who remain in abusive marriages in the name of keeping tradition. They show that these women continue to suffer while those who decide to leave live happily and become economically independent. As has already been mentioned above, these authors give women alternatives to choose what is best for them:

> *Ramatoulaye in* **So Long A Letter,** *remains suffering under her abusive husband who is busy chasing young and slender girls. She has been neglected but she decides to cling to tradition by not leaving her husband. She would rather die suffering. Even her own girl-child advises her to leave her father, and she refuses. Maiguru in* **Nervous Conditions,** *at first she decided to leave but at the end of the day, she finds herself back in the hands of her abusive husband. These female characters are making their choices. They sacrifice to keep a good name. I feel pity for them* (**M-SE).**

Male student E showed that there are some women who choose to suffer at the hands of patriarchy to preserve their marriages. The male student felt pity for such women. He felt that these women have made their choices to remain suffering in order to have a good name in society.

The feminist authors deliberately presented female characters in different situations. For example, Aissotou and Adah walk out of their matrimonial homes, while Ramatoulaye and Maiguru remain suffering. The student sympathised with women who remain suffering in the name of tradition. Maiguru at one point decides to leave her husband but she thinks she needed a man in her life, and she goes back. Ramatoulaye, on the other hand, wants to keep tradition by playing the good wife and she remains. As for Ramatoulaye, it is not about wanting a man by her side, but it is about keeping up appearances in society because her husband had left her and had gone to stay with another wife. The authors seem to show that if women remain in these abusive marriages, they suffer. However, male student M was not comfortable with the way the authors presented their male and female characters:

> *I look at the female authors as agents of dislocation of society, their writings are dangerous, and families are threatened. The way they portray female and male characters is not acceptable. If they are extreme, their texts should not be done in*

universities, why should we teach students dangerous ideologies that are dangerous to society (**M-SM**).

Male student M showed anger towards these feminist writers. According to him, these feminist authors are bringing more harm than good to society. He detested the way female and male characters are presented. His view was that these feminist texts should not be done in universities because of the dangerous feminist ideologies that are inherent in them. The student is more worried about families than the freedom of those who are supposed to take care of those families.

The idea of referring to feminist literature as dangerous, the student felt the ideologies inherent in these texts go against societal expectations thereby causing women to rebel against these expectations. When women rebel against these, then no one will be able to control them and this will lead to disorder in society. So, it means that for order to be maintained in society, women should remain in subservient positions. Therefore, Chitando's (2011) findings that feminist literature is considered dangerous to society were proved correct in this study by the way male student M describes feminist literature.

In the interviews held, some students showed that the portrayal of female and male characters was a true reflection of what happens in different societies. Many women suffer silently and work tirelessly for the progress of their families:

> *Mai Tambu suffers a lot. She has grown far much older than her age. All the burdens are left for her to carry. Her husband does not help her, what he is capable of doing is make her pregnant. She admits in the text that the burdens of womanhood are too much to bear* (**F-SP**).

The female student described how Dangarembga presented Mai Tambu in ***Nervous Conditions,*** by presenting Mai Tambu; the student felt that the author is presenting the condition of women in most African rural settings. Women in rural areas suffer the burdens of bearing children, tilling the land as well as taking care of the children and the husband. *This burden of womanhood is a heavy burden…aren't we the ones who bear children* (**Dangarembga, p.16**).

Mai Tambu works hard to the extent that manual labour wears her out. She looks far older than her age. The student showed that this is a difficult situation for many African rural women. To add on to the student's sentiments, another problem is that, their husbands will make sure that they bear as many children as they can (Oladele, 2004). The portrayal of men and women by these feminist authors is a great message to African men. It is not that the authors portray men in a negative way but they are just showing the effects of patriarchal practices on women.Feminist theory according to Crossman (2009) is one of the major contemporary sociological theories which analyses the status of women and men in society with the purpose of using that knowledge to better women's lives. So, the portrayal of male and female characters in feminist texts is a way of analysing their positions in society so that positive changes towards women can be effected.

Men's portrayal in male-authored texts has always been very positive (Chitando, 2011). These feminist authors are challenging the portrayal of man by male authors and by some female writers, who glorify men (Kambarami, 2006). However, when they portray women who challenge the status quo, their literature is said to be dangerous (Chitando, 2011). Crossman (2009) however contends that, the portrayal of female and male characters is done in order to correct the imbalances that exist between the genders.

> *Men are not used to such ideas, which is why there seem to be some resistance even here at this university. Whenever something new is introduced, obviously there is resistance from the target group. Iam not surprised when my colleagues think that this literature is dangerous. It is natural for them to hold such views because Zimbabwe is a patriarchal nation. But change is inevitable, these men should accept that. Feminism is here, whether we like it or not, women and men issues are going to be discussed in public forums. There is nothing new in what the authors are saying, it is only that women were quiet but things were happening in our societies* **(F-SA)**.

Female student A felt that the reason why some students are not happy with the way female and male characters are portrayed is due to the fact that they are influenced by patriarchal ideologies because Zimbabwe is patriarchal (Chitando, 2011). She seemed to say that, it is not the students' fault to view the portrayal of men and women that way, but it is the system that they grew up in, that have moulded their thinking. She has ascertained that feminism is here in Zimbabwe and people should accept it. She also held the view that women's and men's conditions have always been like that. It is only that no one wrote about the condition

of women. Now that these authors are daring to articulate these problems, people think they are bringing instability amongst families.

Therefore, the authors seem to be saying that women should not just remain suffering, they should fight. They feel there should be fairness in our societies, which could be done by helping each other to carry burdens. The liberal feminists have been advocating for equality through negotiation and this is what these feminist authors seem to be advocating for in their literary texts.

On the same issue of characterisation, the following were some of the students' responses from the assignments they were given. The questions read; **Do you agree with the assertion that male characters in the three novels are negatively portrayed?** The second one read; **To what extent do you agree with the assertion that** *Second Class Citizen, So Long A Letter* **and** *Nervous Conditions* **portray female characters who defy societal norms, values and beliefs?**

The first assignment was given by a male lecturer. Already from the title of the assignment, one can deduce the types of responses from students the male lecturer was expecting. During lecture observations, I observed that this lecturer had a negative attitude towards some feminist ideologies that are inherent in the literary texts he was engaging with. During his engagement with students, non-verbal cues showed how he felt about the issues they were discussing. He was very emotional especially when he commented on married women who leave their matrimonial homes and become 'single mothers.'

The second assignment was given by a female lecturer. I also observed during lecture observations that this female lecturer became very emotional when commenting on issues that concern the freedom of women. She is the same lecturer I described in chapter five, who was emotional when I interviewed her.

These were the responses from the students on the first assignment; male student J wrote:

To a greater extent, I agree that men have been negatively portrayed and women have been positively portrayed. The student gave examples of how male characters are portrayed in the texts, and most of the responses are similar to the ones given above. One issue that he mentioned is that men have been portrayed as selfish, irresponsible, deserters, abusers,

oppressors and are only after self-gratification. The student expressed that the feminist authors are too harsh on male characters. On the other hand, they have glorified women.

Male student Q responded thus:

'I don't agree with the assertion that men have been negatively portrayed.'

He also presented arguments as has been presented in the focus group interviews. However, he wrote that the portrayal of these male characters could be the reason that, these three feminist authors may have been disadvantaged by males as they were growing up, so they are showing their anger towards men. Their anger towards men is equated to Tambu's anger towards Nhamo in **Nervous Conditions,** who was not sorry when her brother Nhamo died.

Students displayed mixed feelings on the portrayal of male and female characters. The following were some of the responses in the second assignment:

Male student E wrote:

'To a larger extent, I agree that the three texts present women who defy societal   values, norms and beliefs. The student cited examples of the female characters that were discussed above. She said according to African beliefs, the woman's role is to bear children and to do household chores. If a woman walks out of these prescribed roles, then she is defying societal beliefs, norms and values.

This is a new dimension he brought that was never mentioned during interviews. According to him, defying societal norms, values and beliefs is not only about a woman leaving her matrimonial home, but also going to work outside the home as is done by Adah, Maiguru, Aissotou and other female characters in the texts. According to male student E, most women characters in these feminist literary texts defy these norms. On the other hand, he gave an example of Mai Tambu as a typical African woman. However, he commented that such typical African women suffer a lot.

Male student D thus wrote:

I do not agree that these women are defying societal values, beliefs and norms. In the first place, who set those values? Men set those values; it is safer to say women defy men's norms, values and beliefs. That is how Shep presented his argument. He felt that because men set those beliefs, so women cannot be blamed for defying such beliefs that are deliberately created to give women a second class status.

Finally, I wanted to hear students' views on the representation of feminist literary texts in their English curriculum. This was one of this research's main objectives. The research question was: what are lecturers' and students' views on the representation of feminist literary texts in the undergraduate English curriculum? So, it was important to find out what these student participants thought about the representation of these feminist literary texts in the undergraduate English curriculum, after such a critical detailed discussion with them.

6.2.6 Representation of feminist literary texts in the undergraduate English curriculum

The selected university undergraduate English curriculum reflects a few feminist literary texts. The difference between female feminist writers and female writers was discussed in Chapter two. During focus group discussions, students displayed different views on the representation of these texts in the English curriculum.

> *This literature is dangerous, and should not be taught in either universities or high schools. It threatens societal harmony. It should not be taught because it brings disharmony amongst families .There is no need to add more of these. Radical feminists are rejected by society* **(M-SQ).**

For male student Q to say that feminist literature is dangerous to society might show some inclination towards patriarchal ideologies. According to him, the themes and character portrayal that are inherent in these literary texts preach practises that contest patriarchal ideologies. When the student talked about harmony in society; he was referring to the hierarchal systems in society that accord women the lowest position on the social ladder. To him, harmony in society is to let women suffer in their subordinate positions and men enjoy the privileges of being male in male-dominated societies (Bressler, 2011). He also thought that their literature is radical, it would influence women to rebel. The student seemed to be indirectly saying, for our societies to stay in harmony; women's problems should not be

articulated. He was more worried about the harmony in families than women's freedom. This was confirmed by his colleague, a female student:

> *These western ideas are dangerous to us in Africa and the family thread is threatened. Perhaps we need to have a certain kind of feminism which is sensitive to Africa, some feminist Ideas are dangerous to Africans, so we need a localised feminism that takes into consideration African values so that family unity is maintained. I think these few texts are enough* **(F-SA).**

Female student A also continued to register sentiments on the dangers that feminist literature pose to African families. She advocated for a feminism that will take into consideration the African values. As a result, she was unconsciously and indirectly advocating for women oppression in her quest to seeing unity being maintained in African homes.

Feminists do not to advocate for breaking the thread that binds families. They advocate for the fair treatment of women and men in society. Women should not be considered inferior to men because they do have the same capabilities as has been displayed in the literary texts. Some students thought these are Western ideologies and perhaps there is need for African ideologies that are sensitive to African values.

After a thorough discussion on the feminist literary texts, these students still thought that the feminist literary texts in their curriculum were adequate.

However, most student participants had different views from those presented above.

> I feel these texts *should be taught and students should be exposed to more of such literature so   that they make informed decisions .Students should be allowed to make their choices in life and should be exposed to this type of literature although you say they present dangerous ideologies but they bring sanity. This should bring awareness to society. I feel more texts of this nature be added to our English   curriculum* **(F-SI).**

Female student I did not support male student Q and female student A'S views. She advocated for the inclusion of more feminist literary texts in their English curriculum. She suggested that although some of her colleagues might think that it is dangerous literature but it serves as an eye opener to students at the university. These texts, according to the female participant, will go a long way in helping students make right decisions in their lives. The

authors have presented many alternatives which both women and men can take. These students can choose from the many alternatives. The female student was not worried about whether her colleagues call this literature dangerous; she was worried about the end result. Her concern was that, these texts should be taught in universities because they conscientise students on the unfair treatment of women and girls in societies that are male-dominated.

> *Teaching these feminist literary texts is a noble idea in many ways; students will be enlightened of their positions in life. So, more of these texts should be added. Girls are cocooned into ignorance, and think that their final destination is rooted in marriage and bearing children and Emecheta is saying gone are those days when women used to cherish marriages, when women used to be dependent on men. She is saying in modern days, women should stand up for their rights, Tsitsi shows us that women can work hard and realise their potential.* **In Second Class Citizen,** *when Adah is born, she is not recognised, but she works hard to become someone in society. I feel pity for our African women who think marriage is an end to their problems, women should wake up and realise their full potential like Tambu and Adah* **(F-SP).**

Female student P looked at marriage as an old institution that oppresses women. On this issue of marriage, Anderson (2005) asserts that radical feminism advocates for separatism, a total break with men.

The student thought that by presenting Adah and Tambu, Emecheta and Dangarembga are saying, girls should not focus on marriage but on their education. Marriage should come as a bonus after one has fulfilled her ambitions. She was of the view that many women make mistakes by thinking that marriage is a means to end their misery or that marriage brings happiness into their lives. She blamed the socialisation process that makes girls believe that they exist here on earth to get married and bear children. She referred to modern days where women are no longer dependent on men and believe that these texts make women realise their full potential.

Male student D showed that he appreciated the noble issues that are explored by these feminist authors. In his argument, he justified the inclusion of more of these texts in their English curriculum.

The texts drive our minds to look at life with broader perspectives, so more of these should be included in the curriculum. It's not about Tambu, Maiguru, Adah, Mai Tambu and Aissotou and their emancipation, it's all about ourselves, I like Maiguru for coming back to her matrimonial home, obviously Babamukuru changes when Maiguru comes back, Dangarembga is right when she portrays Maiguru coming back to her husband, keeping the family intact, She doesn't want women to contribute behind men, she wants women to come and talk in the open, just like what Lucia does, she just storms in and talks for herself. Women should talk and men should be prepared to listen **(M-SD).**

Male student D's justification for the inclusion of these texts was that, the texts are not talking about the women characters in the texts only but also about women in African societies. The student observed that the authors are talking about the Tambus, Nyashas, Adahs and the Aissotous of this world. Women full of determination and courage, women who will not let the world rule them, women who are prepared to face the consequences of their life choices and women who will struggle until final victory! The student observed that, the authors are talking about women who will never be silenced, women like Lucia in **Nervous Conditions**, who have the courage to go to the 'dare' (a meeting place for men only in the Zimbabwean setting).Women like Winnie Mandela of South Africa and Mbuya Nehanda of Zimbabwe, who refused to be silenced. He however, supported the idea of keeping families intact. He supported Maiguru's stance of coming back and resolving issues within rather than going out. He said Dangarembga is not castigating marriages, which is the reason why she created Maiguru. The student thought that more texts should be included in the university undergraduate English curriculum because they deal with topical gender issues.

The inclusion of these texts in the curriculum makes us look at sensitive issues in society and find a solution to them. The feminist authors are just showing us at how best we can look at ourselves. They present realistic situations and come up with solutions. This feminist literature mirrors us just like any other type of literature. The feminist authors present a clear picture of the unfairness in society, treatment of women by men. As if this is unchangeable, the status quo can be changed **(M-SQ).**

Male student Q observed that these feminist writings mirror society. Male student D above said the literary texts are not about Tambu and her lot but it is about us. Student Q commended the feminist authors for presenting to us the realities of life and at the same time,

offering solutions to the problems. The student felt that by presenting women who defy all odds and climb the social ladder, the authors are encouraging women not to sit back and feel defeated. Tambu and Adah succeed because of determination. They refuse to be disadvantaged because of their sex and fight until they get what they want. The feminist authors seem to be saying, it is high time women in different societies stopped suffering from inferiority complex and start fighting for their rights. The male student felt that, these texts will go a long way in conscietising women to realise their potential. Therefore, these texts should be given serious consideration at universities because they deal with gender issues in a unique way.

> *These texts deal with gender issues, the female characters are interesting, it's something new. The relationships between men and women are interesting. These issues are different from those of male authors; these texts are bringing a new dimension to literature, issues that were never talked about, something that was regarded as taboo. Females behaving out of the normal, it's provocative, so students want to engage in these issues where females behave otherwise, so, more of such texts should be included* **(F-SL).**

Female participant L acknowledged that, the issues that are tackled by these feminist authors are different from those by male authors. She observed that these feminist authors have brought in a new dimension to literature by tackling issues that were considered taboo. Such issues like women who defy all odds in society to climb the social ladder. Women who fight back .Women in male-authored texts   were presented as docile and dependent on men but this literature shows men who are dependent on women. Men like Jeremiah in *Nervous Conditions* and Francis in *Second Class Citizen*. The portrayal of such type of men is not acceptable according to African standards because in the African setting, a man is glorified even if he does nothing good. Some male and female students felt this literature is the best literature to teach men and women to unite.

On this issue of the inclusion of feminist literary texts in the undergraduate curriculum, students were given an assignment by a male lecturer to justify the inclusion of these feminist literary texts. The question read: **What is your justification for including feminist novels in your English curriculum?**

Female student P wrote:

> *Feminist literature revolves around literature by women, about women and society. It mirrors how society perceives and treats women. It also deals with how women struggle to be heard in patriarchal societies. These issues are topical and need to be addressed. The literature is an eye opener to both students and lecturers, thus more of it should be included.*

The female student reiterated what was said by her colleagues.

Male student C wrote:

> *The novels are an awakening to both males and females especially university students. We are the ones who are at higher institutions of learning and I believe if it starts with us, then the gospel can be spread very fast to different societies where we come from. The student confirmed that feminist literary texts are very important and should be taught in universities.*

However, one frustrated female student N wrote:

> *I do not think the inclusion of these texts in our English curriculum will help in any way. We have men here at the university, feminism has been the talk of the moment but I do not see any change in these men and even in some of these women. So, why do we worry ourselves with things that are impossible? My argument is that there is no need to add more of these texts in the curriculum if they are failing to conscientise us, university students.*

The student has already been defeated before she has started. If women themselves surrender to men, then who is going to fight for them? She has criticised the inclusion of these texts in the selected university undergraduate curriculum not because she does not really see their importance but she has observed that the unfair treatment of women is still visible at the universities where gender issues are always discussed. She thought there was no need to study such literature since men and some women show that they will not change. What student female participant does not see is that, ending the oppression of women is an uphill struggle and it needs determination. She showed that she was disappointed by her colleagues who are failing to take heed of feminist conscientisation. The reason why these authors are making noise through their literature is to awaken the world to take heed of girls' and women's problems in society.

Most students advocated for a transformation of the undergraduate English curriculum by adding more feminist literary texts in the curriculum. The students have been conscientised on the need for more of these texts through their reading and discussions done during the research process. The feminist reader response approach which was adopted gave participants the freedom to express their feelings towards these feminist literary texts. There was no control of individuals' interpretation of the texts. The approach encouraged free participation of participants. The liberal feminist theory and the feminist and critical paradigms advocate for social transformation. So, students advocated for a transformation of the undergraduate English curriculum.

6.3 Conclusion

This chapter discussed students' views on the feminist literary texts they were studying. They showed that the feminist literary texts are not adequately represented in their English curriculum. The views came out during focus and individual interviews, assignments and informal conversations. They expressed how they felt about different issues that are presented in the feminist literary texts. The transactional reader response theory facilitated a free discussion and presentation of participants' views. Their views were analysed from a liberal feminist perspective. The study took a liberal approach in its advocacy for change of the status quo in the undergraduate English curriculum by engaging participants with these feminist literary texts. However, their views were influenced by several factors. The next chapter discusses factors that influenced participants' views on the feminist literary texts they were studying.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FACTORS INFLUENCING LECTURERS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS ON FEMINIST LITERARY TEXTS

7.1 Introduction

Chapter five and six discussed and analysed lecturers' and students' views on the feminist literary texts they were engaged with. As a result of using the reader response theory, several factors were found to be influencing them. Participants' views were not controlled by the researcher because the reader response theory calls for participants' independent views.

This chapter addressed my third research question; why do lecturers and students hold the views they gave in chapters five and six? The following were identified as factors that influenced the participants.

- Conscientisation
- Patriarchy/socialisation
- Education
- Generation gap
- Religion

The reader response theory is concerned with what the reader makes out of literary texts. The participants' views in this study were a reaction to what they perceived from the feminist literary texts they were engaged with. Their past experiences, emotions and knowledge, background and context, all contributed to how they interpreted the texts.

Below are factors that were drawn from the data that were presented by participants.

7.2 Conscientisation

The findings have shown that, the feminist literary texts that these lecturers and students were engaged with conscietised them on the need to recognise women as full beings in society. The participants have also been conscientised on the importance of studying these texts at university level. Most participants confessed that these feminist literary texts are an eye

opener to both lecturers and students. They showed that most of the conscientisation they had, had come from these feminist literary texts. However, some conscientisation that manifested in these participants might have been that, they engage with gender issues in different discourses at the university. Despite this, most lecturers and students acknowledged that the feminist literary texts they were engaged with had created in them an awareness of gender disparities in society. This was so because during the data elicitation process, women and girls' issues articulated in these texts were discussed in detail. (Details were provided in chapter five and six). So, most of the views these participants gave showed a consciousness about the issues of men, women, boys and girls in society. This consciousness was triggered by feminist ideologies that are observable in the feminist texts they were engaged with to the extent that they advocated for more feminist literary texts in the English curriculum. The data that emerged in chapters five and six is evidence that these participants are now very conscious of critical gender issues.

> *Women need to be treated as full human beings; the feminist authors of these tests have shown that women can do better than men. It is high time everyone in society looked at women differently from the past. The feminist authors are speaking to everyone. Let us listen to them* (**M-LA).**

Male student B showed a similar type of consciousness:

> *Now that women have the platform to voice out their concerns, let them speak to the world. Women have suffered enough, it is high time their concerns be taken into consideration, they have spoken and they are still speaking.*

These male participants' reactions to the feminist ideologies in the texts showed that they are very conscious of feminist ideologies. In other words, the lecturers' and students' views showed awareness to women's problems.

Female student N said that people should not just ignore women's predicament. She was in support of her male colleague (in chapter six) and Male lecturer A's views that women should be listened to. She also displayed that she was very conscious of women's condition in society and showed that she appreciated the works of the feminist authors:

> *These texts are an eye opener to both males and females, so pretending that the women's voices are not being heard or that their voices are not there, is doing*

injustice to the cause of the women's struggle. The only noble way of voicing out the voices of the many silent African women is to use pen and paper like what these authors have done. Women are fighting through paper and pen and for this battle to be won, there is need to study their works at higher institutions of learning **(F-SN).**

Female student N expressed that, the best way for women to be heard is to articulate their problems through writing and also to let their works be studied at higher institutions of learning like universities and colleges.

Supporting his colleagues on women's condition, Male student D had this to say:

I don't like African men who are male chauvinists and taking advantage of women. The title **Second Class Citizen** *prepares us for some type of conflict, and has given the women a reawakening. It is society which transcribes roles and this is just a social construct and there can be a reversal of these roles (***M**-**SD).**

The male student is aware that men in many patriarchal societies take advantage of women because of the first class status that has been accorded to them by society (Chitando, 2011). The feminist literary texts he was studying seem to have contributed a lot in shaping the way he looks at female issues in different societies. He supported women's struggle for emancipation.

The participants have also shown that, their sex orientation has nothing to do with the way they look at women's issues. Both female and male participants supported women's struggle. This suggested a high level of consciousness in the participants.

The participants indicated that they are aware of the second class status that has been accorded women in society and therefore, encourage women to stand up and fight for their freedom. The radical feminists believe in the fight for one's rights and Jaggar (1983) states that, radical feminists want an evolutionary change.

The participants also expressed that they were aware that women have accepted their condition and men have defined women as 'the insignificant other.' Just because these participants are conscientised, they see the need for conscientising women, so that women know that they are not the 'other' but they are human beings with capabilities. Beauvoir supports this view of the 'other' by asserting that, a woman must break the bonds of

patriarchal society and define herself if she wishes to become a significant human being in her own right and to defy male classification as the Other (Bressler, 2011).

Beauvoir is conscientising women that, they are full human beings and there is need for them not to look at themselves with self-pity. Therefore, the lecturers and students believed that women should be able to define themselves in society. This seems to draw from the conscientisation level they have reached.

The other reason for participants' conscientisation seems to stem from the fact that, gender issues are discussed at higher institutions of learning and these lecturers are exposed to such issues. So, these lecturers and students become aware of these issues and advocate for this awareness to all members of society. Most of all, their conscientisation was triggered by engaging with feminist ideologies.

Male lecturer J had this to say:

> *If all people are educated they become aware of the evil practices of the society and change the behaviour of confining ourselves to traditional practices. And once people are enlightened they will change behaviour for the betterment of their families. People like Jeremiah need a re-education. They should be educated so that they know the importance of educating the girl-child. He thinks Tambu was born for marriage, it was proper for Jeremiah to send Tambu to school because she would be educated rather than subjecting her to her mother's situation. Tambu yearned for education so much because she has discovered that marriage is an institution that trains women to suffer silently. Through her education, she wanted to help her mother out of poverty.*

The fact that this male lecturer advocated for the education of the girl-child shows that he is aware that if women and girls are educated, they can break away from the bondage of patriarchal ideologies. He is even aware that what Jeremiah does to Tambu is very unfair, Tambu's mother wallows in poverty and she is helpless. The participant is aware that marriage does not really help women in any way.

The participants' views throughout the study indicated that they were conscientised and they were ready to fight patriarchy to place women where they are supposed to be in society.

(Views were discussed in detail in chapters five and six).So, patriarchy was also drawn from the data as a factor that influenced participants' views.

7.3 Patriarchy and socialisation

The study found out from participants' views that, patriarchy and socialisation were other influential factors that shaped participants' views. During the course of the interviews, data elicited showed that they were products of patriarchy.

> *The situation has been like that since time immemorial. Mai Tambu is right, a woman should subscribe to the roles that she is accorded by society. And also what Maiguru is doing in the text **Nervous Conditions** is just a confirmation of how a typical African woman should behave. She submits to her husband, even the way she works at the homestead, cooking for sisters-in-law, she is a typical example of a respectful African woman* **(M-SC).**

The male student supported Maiguru who is submissive. It is paradoxical in the sense that these students supported feminist ideologies. This indicates that, no matter how conscientised these students seem to be, they are still influenced by patriarchy. On the issue of patriarchy, Kambarami (2006) contends that patriarchal practices within the Zimbabwean Shona culture perpetuate gender inequality and strip women of who they are because custom in Africa is stronger than domination in law and religion. In **Nervous Conditions,** Tambu's mother accepts her condition as a woman and she instils this in her daughter, when Tambu insists that she wants to go to school; "…*and you think you are so different, so much better than the rest of us? Accept your lot and enjoy what you can of it. There is nothing else to be done*" **(Dangarembga, p. 20).**

Tambu's mother has already accepted that tradition has to be kept by every woman. According to Mai Tambu, there is no way women can escape from patriarchal systems. During the course of the interviews, most participants confessed that they were products of patriarchy. Both lecturers' and students' views seemed to have been influenced by patriarchal ideologies. The way male student C above supported how Maiguru humbles herself before her husband indicates how patriarchy influences his views. In the Zimbabwean Shona society, a woman should be submissive and respect her husband and her in-laws.

Despite their level of consciousness, the participants showed that they were still being influenced by patriarchal ideologies. Some of the views they gave on the education of women/girls point to that:

> *If you educate a girl, you do it for the benefit of the other family where she is going to marry. I think Jeremiah and Babamukuru were right to send Nhamo (boy) to school instead of Tambudzai (girl)* However*, things have changed now because of feminist activism, and the girl child should be educated as well* **(M-LJ).**

Although male participant J thought the girl-child should be sent to school, he agreed with Jeremiah's decision in **Nervous Conditions**, of not sending Tambu to school and deciding to send Nhamo instead. Liberal feminists advocate for equality and fairness in society and that none should be disadvantaged because of gender (Baehr, 2013).Tambu is disadvantaged because she is a girl, instead, Nhamo is given first preference because he is a boy. This is evidence of the influence patriarchy has on participant's views. However, he is conscious that the condition of the girl-child has improved since he mentioned that because of feminism, the girl-child should be sent to school. Male lecturer J contradicted himself; first he supported patriarchy and on the other hand, supported feminist ideologies. The transactional reader response theory states that, a reader can be affected by his or her cultural background and can have different views on the same text, depending on the phenomenon under study. Male lecturer J showed that he was being influenced by patriarchal ideologies, and on the other hand, his consciousness on the unfair treatment of the girl-child. The consciousness, I believe might have come from the feminist literary texts he was engaged with. He is an individual who is caught between two contradictory beliefs. However, his views were accepted as they were because the transactional reader response theory which was used to record participants' views gives room for such inconsistences in individuals. Such man is believed by feminist theorists to have been entrapped by patriarchal ideologies on one side and the wish to entangle himself from such ideologies on the other. The liberal feminists would view this participant as someone who is in the process of transforming. So, his inconsistencies are acceptable in this type of a study.

In some cases, female participants, both students and lecturers believed that women should follow tradition in order to stay in their marriages. Some female participants had very strong beliefs that a woman should be dependent on a man and a woman who does not have a man in her life, is incomplete. The feminist texts they were engaged with suggest that women

should not depend on men, and radical feminists call for separatism (Whelehan, 1995) but still, the participants held onto traditional beliefs that a woman should be dependent on a man.

> *There is need to be with a man, I do agree with the liberal feminists and not the radicals. Look at what happens to Adah in **Second Class Citizen**, she is educated but she is not liberated, I think education is not enough but there is need for support from men. A man's presence is necessary for a woman. Usually, if a woman does not have a man beside her, she feels empty* **(F-LD)**.

Female lecturer D supported the idea of marriage although in their texts, the feminist authors give women alternatives. However, lecturer D showed that she does not support Adah who walks out of marriage. The lecturer is very aware of Adah's abusive marriage but because of her patriarchal background which preaches that for a woman to gain respect in society, she should be tied to a man. Despite the level of conscientisation that the lecturer has reached, she seemed to be so much influenced by her socialisation. Although most participants agreed with the feminist ideologies, on the theme of marriage, some of them condemned female characters in the texts that left their matrimonial homes. This seemed to stem from their patriarchal backgrounds. Female lecturer B indicated that, some girls in her lecture did not hide the fact that they strongly supported marriage .She had this to say:

> *Some girls would say, I need to have someone to marry me, what will people say if I don't get a husband. Though they do appreciate that they are empowered by the education they are acquiring but still they feel they should be married, this all has to do with patriarchal influence* **(F-LB).**

The quotation above showed that the girls are very conscious about how women suffer in abusive marriages but still felt that marriage is necessary for them to fulfil societal expectations. The Zimbabwean culture values marriage more than anything else (Kambarami, 2006). However, in Zimbabwe, there are single parents; some are single by choice and others by circumstances. In the texts they were engaged with, Maiguru in *Nervous Conditions* was viewed by both lecturers and students as a typical African woman because of the stance she took to come back to her husband after she had run away, although in some cases they condemned her for coming back. However, the reader response theory allows for such inconsistences.

Participants showed that men and women were entrapped in patriarchal ideologies (This was discussed in depth in chapters five and six). No matter how much they showed that they were conscious that women need freedom, some participants expressed that this should be done cautiously because if women are given too much freedom, they might upset the power relations in society. This is what female student N said:

> Women should know their positions in families. A family headed by a woman according to our African standards is doomed to head for disaster. Men should be given their positions and there is need for women to respect men, so that we have order in our society. It was there before we were born and the situation is just the same, so we need to adhere to tradition, educated as we are, we need to keep our tradition.

Female participant N, on the other hand confessed that as educated as they are, they would find themselves supporting patriarchal ideologies thereby caught in traditional practices. It is not surprising that even during this era of feminism some women are still influenced by patriarchy. The feminist ideologies help women to untangle themselves from patriarchal bondage, but the Zimbabwean women find themselves entrapped because of the way they were socialised. Although these women are still trapped in patriarchy, they are conscientised because traces of freedom were seen in these females' views.

Female lecturer I, who was among those who supported female characters who left their matrimonial homes asserted that, if she discovers that her marriage was not working, she would rather leave than to suffer in the name of tradition. This shows that women are beginning to realise that they are being oppressed. The female lecturer was supporting Adah and Aissotou's decisions to move out of their marriages:

> I would not let myself suffer in the name of marriage. If the marriage does not work, I would rather move out and face the consequences alone. And in the texts, when Aissotou and Adah walk out of their matrimonial homes, they become economically independent, more than what they were in their matrimonial homes. Equipped with this education that I have, I would not seek refuge in men although tradition demands I do that **(F-LI).**

According to the data that emanated from the interviews, these women are being conscientised about their oppressive conditions in society and would want to take the

alternatives the feminist authors are offering them. However, these participants are aware of patriarchal influence on them.

Although some of the students' and lecturers' views showed that they were affected by the way they were socialised, there was evidence that these participants were trying to re-socialise themselves and abandon patriarchal ideologies as is in the above quotation. Liberal feminists call for a re-socialisation of society. Marxist feminist theory portends that, society shapes our consciousness. The social and economic conditions influence how and what we believe and value. As a result, Marxism offers us an opportunity and a plan for changing the world from a place of bigotry, hatred, and conflict resulting from class struggle, to a classless society where wealth, opportunity and education are actually accessible for all people (Bressler, 2011). However, because society shapes one's consciousness as claimed by Marxists, male student M showed that no matter how much women are abused, they should live up to societal expectations and remain in those abusive marriages. This belief stems from the socialisation process that the male student went through. This is what he said:

> *Although women are abused in their marriages, they should stay in those marriages; it's against societal expectations for a woman to walk out on her husband. I don't support what Adah and Aissotou do in the texts. The woman is socialised to keep her family and husband, this is according to our African culture. Why should she leave her matrimonial home? If she does, she will be breaking tradition* **(M-SM).**

Although these feminist authors have shown how women suffer under the yoke of men, male participant M felt it was proper for the woman to stay in that marriage because society wants to see her within the kitchen walls. According to the participant, walking out on a man is socially unacceptable. Participant M is aware of the condition of women in society, but he still clings to patriarchal ideologies. This might be because in the Zimbabwean Shona tradition, a woman is supposed to stay in marriage no matter how much she is abused because of the bride price that is paid by the husband. Reports from the Musasa Project confirmed this:

> *Zimbabwe Republic Police confirmed initial impressions that, not only was violence against women widespread, but it was also acceptable within the society at large. The violence against women is acceptable is one which is shared with many other countries in the world. In Zimbabwe, the attitude is exacerbated by aspects of*

culture and tradition, such as the bride wealth system(lobola)which by selling women to their future husbands, reinforces the impression that the woman is the husband's property ,to do as he wishes, beating her included. Musasa sought to *transform the society through an extensive public education campaign* **(Musasa Project: Stewart, 2014).**

These findings from the Musasa Project in Zimbabwe might explain why both male and female participants in some cases, in this study, supported the dominance of males over females. As has been shown above, the Zimbabwean Shona tradition supports male-dominance to the extent that women accept their condition as inferior whilst men enjoy wife battering. Therefore, the bride prize makes women to be commodities in society resulting in their abuse. On the same issue, Stanko (1980), a feminist writer, states that:

> *the abuse of women is a manifestation itself; so often characterised as typical, it has been seen to be a natural right of men. According to women's experiences, much of male sexual and physical abuse towards women is not prohibited, it is regulated. Fathers have the right to use their daughters as they please, husbands their wives and bosses their female employees* **(p.71).**

The socialisation process that both women and men go through determines their positions in society. Women's engendered vulnerability to intimidating and violent male behaviour is due to their social position, not their biological position. A woman is made and not born according to De Beauvoir. This means that society creates the type of woman it wants, therefore, making her an object of abuse by men. Male student M sees nothing wrong with women abuse. To him, it is normal for women to be abused by men as Stanko has shown in the above quotation.

To further show how socialisation influenced participants' views, female student H had this to say referring to Nyasha in ***Nervous Conditions;*** she is

> *...rude to her father, as a girl, she should have learnt that girls are not allowed to go out till late, Chido is a boy and he is allowed to go out any time he feels like going and also coming home any time. As for Nyasha, it is not proper for a girl –child to come home late and to make matters worse, she smoked. In our African culture, girls are not allowed to smoke. Nyasha is too radical.*

Female student H blamed Nyasha in **Nervous Conditions,** who tried to fight for her rights by fighting her father. She condemned Nyasha for going against societal norms, values and beliefs. The socialisation process that this female student went through influences her to blame Nyasha for not adhering to rules that govern girls and boys. Already from this participant, it can be deduced that she believes boys should   have no restrictions and girls have to be restricted. She also believes that Nyasha is radical in that she smokes, which is unacceptable in African culture. She strongly believes that girls and boys are not the same, so they should be treated differently.

This patriarchal influence on participants made them to disagree with the feminist authors in some cases although data revealed that they are conscientised. Female lecturer D argued:

> *Why do the authors present to us male characters like Jeremiah and Francis? They are disgracing African men. Someone who is not of African descent will look negatively at all African men. These two male characters are a disgrace but we do not expect our men to be like Francis and Jeremiah. I think they stripped African men of their manhood and this we do not accept. Maybe it stems from the way we were socialised that men should be respected at all costs* **(F-LD).**

Although the participants blamed the socialisation process, but they are also aware that the way they were socialised influences their thinking. Female lecturer D blamed authors for presenting male characters that are not forthcoming. To her, men are not supposed to be disgraced like that. African men have always been looked at as superior human beings. The female lecturer felt that the ways the authors have presented these male authors go against societal expectations, and by African standards, this is totally unacceptable. Therefore, some of the views that both female and male participants gave were indicative of the extent to which they were influenced by patriarchy and the socialisation process they went through.

The participants do present contradicting views, in the preceding chapters, participants agreed that there was need for a re-socialisation and a re-education but at times, they would go against feminist ideologies. The participants showed that although they are conscientised, patriarchal ideologies are still inherent in them. The university students and lecturers are enlightened, so one would expect to hear the influence of their educational backgrounds in engaging with feminist ideologies. However, they have shown that no matter how much they

have been conscientised and how much education they have acquired, they still cling to patriarchy.

Patriarchy demands of men that they become and remain emotional cripples, since it is a system that denies men full access to their freedom of will. Therefore, it is difficult for any man of any class to rebel against patriarchy, to be disloyal to the patriarchal parent, be that parent female or male (understanding patriarchy http: //ImagineNoBorders.org.). Participants showed that some of their views were influenced by socialisation and patriarchal practices. Men have also shown and admitted that they are entrapped by patriarchy. However, their level of education also influenced some of their views.

7.4 Education

Data suggest that the education level of these students and lecturers seemed to have influenced them to give some of the liberal views they had on the feminist literary texts they were engaged with. Most of their views showed that they supported feminist ideologies although some traces of patriarchal ideologies were evident in them. These university lecturers and students are exposed to gender issues and understand what oppression of women and girls entails. This shows their level of conscientisation. Female student A had this to say:

> In **Second Class Citizen,** *Adah works and brings money home; she looks after Francis, her husband, Francis' mother and the children. What's wrong with the woman bringing food? Its patriarchy that makes these things, men have been made to believe that they are the ones who have to bring money home and care for both wife and children. We need to break this tradition. These authors are showing reality. We should not be talking about reversal of roles here, who accords these roles? We should talk about what men and women are capable of doing in their families. Who does what? I think that is what important.*

The female student's views are indicative of where her education has taken her to. Female student A is talking about breaking tradition because she is aware that if women do not untangle themselves from tradition, they will remain oppressed. Such views usually come

from the modern educated and conscientised woman, who has learnt a lot about the condition of women through the feminist literature she reads and the level of education she has attained. On the other hand, Male participants confessed during the interview that they are products of patriarchy and that some choices they make in life are influenced by patriarchy. However, they demonstrated that they do understand women's problems and were of the view that there was need to help women fight patriarchy. This is what male lecturer J said:

> *Why should women be forced by tradition to live under such hard conditions? Just because they are married? I think this treatment of women by men should be put to an end. I wouldn't want to see my daughter suffering like that. I like Daba's character in* **So Long A Letter** *when she encourages her mother to leave her father, after he had married her friend, Binetou. Women have suffered enough.*

This shows that male lecturer J has gone through a re-education process through the feminist literature he engages with. Data show that their education level makes them support the feminist movement. Literature reviewed has shown that most studies exploring feminism in Western countries have focused on college students, often concluding that attending college tends to have a liberalising effect on individuals in several domains related to gender attitudes (Bryant, 2003). It might also be that, the nature of college life offers an insular environment in which students begin to question and adopt new views from college courses and women's studies in particular.

A study carried out in America by McCracken (2002) suggests that in one of the literary texts they were studying, girls supported the female character who walked out of her matrimonial home; not only the females supported her but males as well. McCracken's study and the current study have yielded the same results. This might indicate that the level of education influences both males and females despite their geographical locations.

To further show how participants' views were influenced by their education, Male student J commented that:

> *Adah becomes the bread winner whilst Francis is a passive recipient .There is nothing wrong with that because the two should complement each other. And Adah is doing it perfectly well. Tradition states that the men should provide for the family. This is*

wrong because women can do that as well. That is why we advocate for women's emancipation.

McCracken (2002), in his study, found that both his female and male university students had the same views towards women characters that seemed to be radical. Gender issues are discussed in different discourses at institutions of higher learning like universities and as a result, these students are conscientised on feminist ideologies.

To add to the fact that the participants' views were influenced by their education, Reid and Purcell (2004) carried out a study on American female college students and found out that their exposure to college life influenced their positive attitudes towards feminist ideologies. They reported that these women who had a greater exposure to feminists and feminism had a greater sense of collective identity or "we-ness" with feminists. Stanley Fish's Social reader-response theory states that any individual interpretation of a text is created in an interpretive community of minds consisting of participants who share a specific reading and interpretation strategy. This supports the findings in this study that participants' views on feminist ideologies were influenced by their exposure to college life. As a community, participants in this study, showed that they belonged to the same community since their interpretations of feminist ideologies showed similarities in as far as supporting feminist ideologies was observed. Therefore, education becomes a contributory factor to participants' views on their positive attitudes towards feminist literary texts.

Besides students and lecturers belonging to the same community, in this case the university, the qualitative case study design which this study adopted makes it easy for a researcher to deal with the same objects that are related to each other by certain beliefs, norms and values. The transactional reader response theory accommodates individuals who bring their interpretation of texts from different cultural backgrounds. The readers interpret texts according to their knowledge of the subject being discussed. The participants in the study had different age groups. Lecturers' and students' ages were very different. Most lecturers were in their forties and fifties and most students in their late twenties and early thirties. Despite their differences in age, participants showed that they belonged to the same generational cohorts.

7.5 Generational cohorts

The other factor that influenced participants' views was this generation of feminism. These participants operate in a generation where feminism has become topical. This affected their views somehow. At institutions of higher learning, gender issues are discussed in different discourses, consequently, these university lecturers and students participate in some activities where gender issues are involved. As a result, generational cohorts have been found to be influencing the views they gave on the feminist literary texts they were engaged with. Some older lecturers confessed that although they belonged to the 'old generation' they had to move on with times and leave their old beliefs and adopt these new ideologies.

> *I believe we have to leave our old perceptions about women and focus on what these feminist authors are telling us today. Our old beliefs about women have been condemned in the three texts. It's a generation of new ideologies* **(M-LA).**

The male lecturer's view showed that he was affected by the ideologies of this generation on women's issues. He talked about the old beliefs, implying that the old beliefs do not work in his new generation. Bettencourt, Haase & Byrne (2011) who carried out a study in the United States of America, found out that attitude towards feminism between intergenerational groups of family members in the United States College students and their older relatives was influenced by their different generations. They found that different generations have their unique ideas and way of thinking, and that generational cohorts tend to exhibit common views or attitudes based on a shared historical and social context.

Bettencourt et al. (2011) found that an individual's attitude towards feminism may be influenced by one's stage of life. This shows that attitudes towards feminism have something to do with one's generation. Therefore, this study and Bettencourt et al. (2011) yielded the same results to some extent.

This study has also found from data that attitude towards feminism has to do with the time or generation which the individual grew in and also other factors that have been discussed above. The results from my study are indicative of how feminism has spread at this university, in this generation, in Zimbabwe. As a result, I would want to hypothesise that feminism has also impacted on lecturers and students at other Zimbabwean universities.
Male student Q commenting on the new generation said:

The new generation both males and females are advocating for equality of both partners, The new generation is enlightened on the capabilities of women and have accepted that the woman is taken as a second class citizen because of patriarchy, the women have also accepted their positions in society blindly.

The new generation wants to see equality for both sexes. The male student acknowledged that the new generation is enlightened and both males and females are advocating for the change of the status quo.

Some years before independence and a few years after independence in Zimbabwe, women were not allowed to work outside the home. When it happened that she went to work, her husband would take her salary. She had no control over her salary but now the situation has improved in Zimbabwe. That is why the participants castigated Babamukuru in *Nervous Conditions* for taking Maiguru's salary.

The situation has changed in our country since independence, women can now go and work outside the home and get their salaries. Many men in Zimbabwe now accept that women should do what they want with their salaries. With the advent of feminism, no man will dare to control a woman as is done by Babamukuru in Nervous Conditions (F-SA).

Female student A gave an overview of how feminism has impacted on both men and women in Zimbabwe. Men who belong to this generation of feminism respect their wives without controlling their incomes. There might be still some isolated cases, where husbands still control their wives' salaries but generally in Zimbabwe, this practice has since been abandoned. Women are emancipated now on this aspect. These husbands are now different from Babamukuru in *Nervous Conditions.* This literary text depicts the status of working women during the colonial era.

Male lecturer A also commented that, although lecturers of his age both male and female belonged to the 'old school', they have to adopt and adapt to modern ideologies:

Look at my generation, these issues were never discussed, we belong to the old generation, the old school where women are supposed to behave in a certain manner but because of these new ideas, liberal ideas, one has to change and go by what is happening although conservative, but I think there is need for change. Society is changing.

Therefore, from the data gathered, some of the views lecturers and students gave were influenced by generational cohorts. Male lecturer A has admitted that there is need for transformation from the old beliefs that used to characterise their generation. These lecturers and students despite their ages belong to this same generation of feminism. Feminism has become topical and lecturers and students at the university are exposed to gender issues. This study has also enlightened these participants. If more studies of this nature are carried out with university lecturers, then feminist ideologies would be easily accepted.

Lastly, some influence from the participants' religious backgrounds manifested during the data gathering process.

7.6 Religion/Christianity

Zimbabwe is a mainly Christian country with isolated groups of other minor religions (Kambarami, 2006). Some of the views that these participants gave showed that they were influenced by their Christian/religious backgrounds. Although data showed that participants were influenced by religion, traces of their consciousness were visible in the views they gave. The qualitative nature of this study and the theoretical framework underpinning this study gave participants room to express their views freely. Although some participants supported Christianity, they showed that they were conscious that religion oppresses women, so there was nothing they could do about it except to follow what it prescribes for men and women. Such comments as these:

> *At times we are forced to be submissive because at church, women are taught to be submissive. So it's not about patriarchal ideologies only but also the church reinforces this docility in women, so, at times we to do it, so that we don't go against biblical doctrines. So, what Adah does by letting Francis control her salary is biblical, so there is nothing wrong with that, although it shows that Adah is being abused* **(F-LD)**.

Female lecturer D supported Adah who is submissive to her husband, Francis, who beats her almost every day. To her, Adah's submissiveness shows that she is going by biblical teachings. The story that surrounds the creation of humanity has made women occupy a subordinate position in the Church and in the family as well and because of this scenario, obviously women are viewed merely as second-class citizens. Such patriarchal attitudes have

penetrated into the church and have seen women being forced into submissive roles (Kambarami, 2006). However, because of consciousness, female lecturer D admits that Adah is being abused.

Female lecturer D, although supporting biblical teachings is aware that these teachings perpetuate docility in women and thereby subjecting them to oppression. That is why she said we are forced to be submissive. To echo female lecturer D's sentiments on women being forced to be submissive, Stanton (1993) states that Christianity acts as an oppressive force to women because it excludes and sometimes denigrates them, although many women feel it offers them a place of belonging, comfort, acceptance and encouragement.

The tone of female lecturer D's voice showed that she was not happy with the situation although she was practising it. To support women's submissiveness, St Paul's letter to the Colossians says that the woman is expected to "submit to her husband" (Colossians 3:18).

Male lecturer F had this to say:

> *In our society, women and children are the ones who constitute the highest number of church goers, so they learn this docility from church. When they come back from church, we want to see them practising that. So, Babamukuru and Francis are doing what the bible teaches them to do. At home, as a man, I should be in control of my family because the bible gives me that priesthood. So, I support these men in the texts.*

The Christian background of male lecturer F makes him support the subordinate role of women. To him, there is nothing wrong if a man controls his wife because the bible teaches that. He observed that women and children are the most religious in the Zimbabwean society, so there is need for them to follow religiously what the bible teaches them. Also from the tone of his voice, he is quite aware that the bible teaches women and children docility. He is conscious of this but because men think they were given divine authority by God to rule women and children, they have to go by the teachings of the bible. On this issue, Chikodili (2011) contends that Christianity gives women a secondary status. Therefore, religion is used by men to oppress women and children. On the same issue, radical feminist theorists believe that the church has become a site of exploitation.

Male lecturer F's argument was that, men were given divine authority to rule women, so there is nothing wrong with women taking subservient roles in society. Stanton (1993) argues

that for over a hundred years, the bible has often been used to maintain the oppression of women by men. As a result, women are therefore viewed as second class citizens. Male lecturer G had this to say:

> *The reason why God gave men authority to rule women is because it was Eve who was deceived by the serpent in Eden, it was not Adam. God then saw that the woman is weak and can be easily deceived, so it is necessary for a man to control the woman, because on her own, she cannot make wise decisions. That is why the serpent easily defeated her.*

From male lecturer G's argument, the woman's situation is made worse by the fact that, it was the woman (Eve) who made the man (Adam) to sin in the Garden of Eden (Kambarami, 2006). This portrayal of women as the weaker sex makes men to strictly supervise women. Participant M above showed that he is in total agreement that women should be supervised by men. He has shown that it was God's decision because women can be easily deceived. In **Genesis 3:16,** one reads "Unto the woman he said…and thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee."Influenced by their Christian backgrounds, most of the participants agreed that the teachings of the bible should be adhered to. Furthermore, the myth that Eve was created after Adam, gives women an inferior position, therefore, women's second class status is a result of Eve's role as a temptress in the fall of humanity.

In their views, lecturers and students supported women who are submissive to their husbands. Female participants showed that they also supported these biblical teachings:

> *The bible teaches that the man is the head of the family and the woman is just a helper. A helper only works under instructions. So, as women, we are just helpers. So, when we go and work outside the home, we will be helping our husbands. Whatever we bring home belongs to the husband. The church   teaches us that the man should be responsible and knows what to do with the money I bring home. If we are Christians, we should do what the bible teaches us to do. I support Ramatoulaye in So Long A Letter who remains submissive to her husband* **(F-SR).**

Female student R supported Ramatoulaye who remained loyal to her husband even after the death of the husband. She felt that if one is a Christian, she/he has to go by Christianity standards. This dominion of men over women is also practised in society, which means that customary practices are also practised in church, further perpetuating the oppression of

women. Okome (2003) argues that customary practices have been incorporated into religion, and ultimately have come to be believed by their practitioners. As a result, some of the participants' views were influenced by their beliefs in the Christian religion. These views showed that some participants have strong Christian backgrounds.

Male student J had this to say:

> *The bible is our guide, so that we live happily in society as well as in our families. The man and the woman were given their positions in the home. A man is the head of his family which means he steers everything. So what Mai Tambu, Maiguru, Ramatoulaye and Adah do in the texts is what the bible commands them to do. It's not anything outside this world.*

The male student supported the teachings from the bible by citing examples from the texts of women who are docile. He even mentioned that the positions in families were God ordained. This echoes Stanton's (1993) argument that, Christianity practices exclude women from particular roles in church, family and society. This shows that religion is also used to supress women rights in a patriarchal society. Religion is seen as an achievement to solve problems in society but in a patriarchal society, it is used to justify the domination of women as it demands unconditional surrender to its principles (Kambarami, 2006).

Christianity among other factors was therefore found to be influencing the views the participants gave on the literary texts they were engaged with. Both male and female participants agreed that Christianity was important for it enhances order in families although they were aware that it is oppressive. These participants were the ones who supported feminist ideologies in chapter five and six and condemned women oppression but in this case, supported women subordination. However, the reader response theory adopted in this study allows for such diversity of thought. Participants are allowed to construct knowledge from their experiences, knowledge, and cultural backgrounds (Rosenblatt, 1995). A participant can have different interpretations of the same phenomenon under study. The different factors that emanated from the data are evidence that participants had different influences depending on the subject that was being discussed. So, it is not surprising that participants who were very vocal pertaining to women oppression have become conservative on this issue. The nature of this study allows for such diversity.

7.7 Conclusion

Various factors influencing participants' views were discussed. The discussion in this chapter showed that conscientisation was the most influential factor amongst other variables that were discussed. Other influential factors that were discussed were patriarchy/socialisation, education, generational cohorts and religion. Male and female participants agreed on most feminist ideologies that are observable in the feminist literary texts.

The next chapter, which is the last chapter of this thesis, discusses conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Introduction

The chapter starts by giving a summary of the findings, followed by reflecting on how the study answered the critical research questions as reflected in chapter one of this study. It also reflects on recommendations given to lecturers, chairpersons and deans of faculties. It then proceeds to establish how the study makes contributions to new knowledge, its strengths, limitations and weaknesses and concludes by giving recommendations for further study.

The main research questions underpinning this study are: (a) what are lecturers' and students' views on feminist literary texts in the undergraduate English curriculum at a university in Zimbabwe?(b) Why do they hold these views? and (c) how do lecturers and students feel about the representation of feminist literary texts in the English curriculum?

The next section will synthesise findings from the study to answer the critical research questions that guided this study.

8.2 Summary of findings

The next section gives a summary of lecturers' views.

8.2.1 Lecturers' views on feminist literary texts

This section synthesises findings to answer the question; what are lecturers' views on the feminist literary texts they were teaching?

Lecturers expressed their views on the themes which were discussed in chapter five. Their views showed that they supported feminist ideologies that are observable in the feminist literary texts they were teaching. These lecturers, both male and female showed that through

these texts, they were very conscious of the predicament of women in society. Therefore, they were ready to change the status quo in society by introducing feminist ideologies on the students they teach. They said they were also ready to change the status quo manifest in the university undergraduate English curriculum by advocating for more feminist literary texts. Some lecturers admitted that they had not thought about that because they had also studied male-authored texts when they were students. They admitted however, that with the advent of feminism, there was need to pay special attention to these feminist literary texts to ensure representation of feminist ideologies in the undergraduate English curriculum. These feminist literary texts address critical gender issues that have become topical around the globe.

The lecturers also admitted that their engagement with feminist literary texts had given them an insight into women's problems and therefore, there was need for men and women to fight patriarchy together. Both female and male lecturers blamed patriarchy for the suffering of women in African societies. They also blamed patriarchy for the way men treat women. From the texts they were teaching, they agreed that the authors were presenting realistic issues, although some male lecturers, in isolated cases, thought the female feminist writers were exaggerating about male characters. This is because African tradition does not allow men to be cared for after by a woman as in the case of Francis in *Second Class Citizen.* Data also showed that this belief was partly because of their socialisation and also the patriarchal ideologies that characterise Zimbabwean gender relations.

However, lecturers felt that more feminist literary texts should be included in the university undergraduate English curriculum for they engage with topical issues. They felt that feminist voices are not adequately represented in the undergraduate English curriculum. They expressed that gender issues are a global issue so there is need for universities to include more of such texts for they conscientise both lecturers and students on critical gender issues. These texts also tackle gender issues in a very effective manner. The lecturers believe that if these feminist texts are given serious consideration, then social transformation is inevitable. They argued that society should be transformed through such literary texts and this should start at institutions of higher learning like universities.

8.2.2 Students' views on feminist literary texts

The findings will be summarised to answer the question: what are university students' views on feminist literary texts? The students gave their views on the following themes ;reversal of

roles, voice of the voiceless women, socialisation/patriarchy, entrapment of women and men, portrayal of women and men and the representation of feminist literary texts in the undergraduate curriculum.

Student participants, like their lecturers, supported feminist ideologies. They felt that these texts are not adequately represented in their English curriculum. To them, these texts are an eye opener to societies that are male-dominated. Data showed that, this seemed to have stemmed from their level of consciousness. They advocated for the addition of more feminist literary texts in the university undergraduate English curriculum. Although two male students thought that feminist literature is dangerous to society, further probing revealed that their views were influenced by their patriarchal orientation.

Finally, the question as to why they hold these views is answered in summary below.

8.2.3 Factors influencing lecturers' and students' views

The study suggests that there was no single factor that solely influenced lecturers' and students' views on the feminist literary texts they were engaged with. Their attitudes towards these feminist literary texts were found to be influenced by several factors, though some factors were more prominent than others. Conscientisation was found to be the most influential factor. However, other factors like patriarchy, education, socialisation, religion and generational cohorts were also found to be influencing their views (These were discussed in detail in chapter seven of the thesis). The gender of the individual participants was found to be influencing participants' views in very isolated cases. Therefore, it was not considered in this study as a factor influencing participants' views. However, most research done in Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, studies by Morojele (2007) and Maphaha (1996) among many others (this was discussed in Chapter two of the thesis) found that an individual's attitude towards the opposite sex was influenced by his/her own gender. On the contrary, this study suggests that the influence of gender on participants' views was insignificant. Female and male participants agreed on most issues that concerned women emancipation and together, they agreed that patriarchy should be fought in order to emancipate women (Their views were provided in detail in chapter five and six of this study). Most males and females showed that they supported the feminist ideologies that are observable in the feminist literary texts they were engaged with. As a result, they advocated for more feminist literary texts in the undergraduate English curriculum. To say female participants supported these feminist

ideologies because they are female, will be an erroneous assumption because both sexes showed the same interest in the texts they were engaged with. Female participants in other situations gave credit to male characters where it was due and condemned female characters whenever it was necessary and males did likewise.

Factors like socialisation and patriarchy which were found in this study to be influencing participants' attitudes towards feminist literary texts are similar to Morojele (2009), Maphaha (1996) Kambarami (2006) and Chitando's (2011)findings. Furthermore, Morojele's study also revealed that gender attitudes were influenced by religion which also manifested in this study.

McCracken (2002) and Bettencourt et al.'s (2011) studies found that education and generational cohorts influenced university students' attitudes towards feminism. Their results are similar to the results yielded in this study. McCracken and Bettencourt et al.'s studies were carried out on university students in America, and the current study was conducted in Sub- Saharan Africa. This might be true then, that attending college tends to have a liberalising effect on individuals (Bryant, 2003). Most studies carried out in Sub-Saharan Africa were carried out on primary and secondary school pupils and their teachers. This might contribute to the difference in the results yielded in these studies and the current study. Despite the differences in the results, the studies carried out in Sub-Saharan Africa gave me insight into this study and I was also able to build my study on Chitando (2011) and Moyana's (2006) studies among many others.

The study was viewed from a liberal feminist perspective; therefore, it found that participants were much aware of the negative impact patriarchy has on both men and women, but, especially on women. The participants also advocated for equality of both men and women and also advocated for more feminist literary texts in the undergraduate English curriculum because these texts address gender issues that are topical in this era of feminism.

Therefore, from the findings summarised above, the following **conclusions** were made from the study:

The decoded meanings from the feminist literary texts by participants reflect that their gender has nothing to do with their attitudes towards feminist literature in general and feminist literary texts in particular. The views reflect that, participants' attitudes towards feminist

literature in general and feminist literary texts in particular were influenced by their conscientisation, patriarchy, socialisation, education, religion and generational cohorts. The participants felt that more feminist literary texts should be added to the undergraduate English curriculum since these texts address gender issues. Lastly, consciousness of oppressive patriarchal systems is evident among participants' interpretations of feminist writings. This became evident in the emancipatory gender shifts indicated in the views of both male and female participants.

8.3 Recommendations

8.3.1 To university lecturers, chairpersons of departments and Deans of Faculties

Feminist literary texts deal with topical and contemporary issues, so these texts should not be studied for literature's sake at the university but should be studied to initiate change in people's mind sets. University students who study these texts are capable of changing the future of the girl-child and women, and this can be initiated from university because universities are a microcosm of mainstream society. Therefore, I would like to urge lecturers to apply what is read in the texts to real life situations. The reader response theory can provide lecturers and students a platform to discuss social issues in detail. It is with due consideration then, that I encourage all universities in Zimbabwe to initiate change in society through their students by engaging them seriously with these feminist texts.

As a feminist activist, I advocate that Deans and Chairpersons facilitate seminars addressing the impact of patriarchy on men and women at the university, as is presented in the feminist literary texts. Students from all faculties could be invited and literature students be given the platform to present to their colleagues and lecturers on the theme. Male and female students can be given equal opportunities to present in these seminars. This can help to create awareness of both males and females on how patriarchal ideologies imprison them. This awareness would therefore be created not only in English literature students but also in students in other disciplines in the university; as a result, these students can serve as agents of social change in society.

Finally, data indicates that participants advocate for more feminist literary texts in the undergraduate English curriculum. This suggests that feminist voices are not well represented in the undergraduate English curriculum. This might also be the situation in other universities in Zimbabwe. Therefore, I recommend that lecturers add more feminist voices in the undergraduate curriculum. Feminist writings by authors like Alice Walker, Ngozie Chimamanda, Andreas Neshani and Tsitsi Vera, amongst many others. These feminist authors discuss gender issues in a manner that compel society to change their attitudes towards women. The alternatives these female authors give in their texts are indications that they advocate for social justice. By including such texts in the English curriculum, lecturers will also be advocating for social justice in different societal groups in Zimbabwe.

8.4 Contributions to new knowledge

This study aimed to undertake an exploration of and establish the role of feminist literary texts with the aim of proposing to the curriculum, more feminist literary texts in the selected university undergraduate English curriculum. It was through this study that university lecturers were conscientised on the need to add more feminist literary texts in the university undergraduate English curriculum. The research process helped them to realise that they were overlooking feminist voices in the English curriculum. In this way, I hope I contributed to this awareness. Most of all, I have contributed to their professional growth as well because they were able to discuss gender issues in a critical manner during the course of the research process.

The study is unique in exploring Zimbabwean lecturers' and students' views on the feminist ideologies that are observable in feminist literary texts in the undergraduate English curriculum in this particular university. Most studies that dealt with feminist literary texts concentrated on analysing the content of the texts using the library as their source of information. This study has gone a step further to gather data from lecturers and students who are directly engaged with these texts. It has intensified a critical consciousness of oppressive and unfair gender practices in a patriarchal society by using feminist literary texts as tools for creating consciousness in university lecturers and students. Through engagement with feminist theories and feminist literary texts, the study exposed a deeper understanding of how

gender constructions prevalent in a patriarchal society are oppressive to women. By creating a platform of discussion through individual interviews, focus groups and informal conversations, the study developed a deepened alertness in students and lecturers of gender inequality, discriminations and the critical need for gender equality.

The lecturers and students, who were engaged in the interpretation of the feminist literary texts during the data gathering process, heightened their awareness on the importance of feminist literary texts in addressing critical gender issues. As a result, the lecturers and students advocated for a fairly significant representation of feminist literary texts in the university undergraduate English curriculum. Therefore, it is hoped that this thesis is a convincing argument for the change of the status quo in the university undergraduate English curriculum, not at the selected university only but also at other universities in Zimbabwe as well.

The study contributes significantly towards creating consciousness of the consequences of gender inequality and injustice in society as has been visible in the feminist literary texts under study. Some participants already have interpretations that are critical of such injustices as evidenced from the interpretations they made from the feminist texts. This study's relevance is lodged in its future potential to conscientise university lecturers to critically look at university curricula and include curricula that is gender sensitive in all faculties at the university. This can be done by lecturers because their sphere of influence of transformation is broad (Rutoro et al.*,* 2013).

8.5 Guidelines for the feminist and reader response theories

From the findings of this study and the conclusions drawn, this study makes recommendations for the adoption of feminist and the reader response theories at university level as enabling strategies for social transformation. The reader response theory gives individuals the capacity to express their views because participants construct meaning in relation to the text (Tyson, 2006).The reader response theory considers readers' reactions to literature as vital to interpreting the meaning of the text and lends credence to Roland Barthes' famous aphorism that the death of the author has resulted in the birth of the reader. As a result, the reader gives meaning to the written text by bringing his/her own beliefs, experiences and knowledge and when the reader interacts with the texts, he/she will be

creating meaning. Consequently, participants in this study had the leverage to create their own meanings as they engaged with the feminist literary texts. This enabled them to express their views, on the way they felt about feminist ideologies observable in the literary texts they were engaged with.

The feminist theory used together with the reader response theory helped lecturers and students to comprehend the texts from a historical and cultural viewpoint. The socio-cultural contexts are important when interpreting and understanding a feminist literary text because gender issues are included throughout history. Patriarchal principles may never be completely eliminated from our society but students with more knowledge about the historical information of feminist literary texts may be able to develop a greater appreciation towards gender issues when interpreting these texts.

Feminist literary texts mirror the values of society and culture, sometimes reinforcing and at times disputing gender stereotypes. Lecturers can assess how students' values and beliefs determine how they interpret these texts and alert them to possible biases. Through the feminist and reader response theories, lecturers and students can discuss and dismiss stereotypes and social prejudices which appear in male-authored texts by exploring multiple interpretations heightened by the reader response theory.

8.6 Recommendations for further study

The following recommendations for further study are put forward stemming directly from the findings and proceedings of this research.

This research is limited to the undergraduate English curriculum; therefore, there is need for a study to be done on the postgraduate English curriculum. I also advocate for more research in other universities in Zimbabwe on this phenomenon.

This study was limited to using western feminism in the analysis of African feminist literary texts; therefore, I further recommend that research be carried out on African feminist literary texts using African feminism. African feminism's basic assumption is to evoke African values which are cherished by African societies.

A further study of the backgrounds of the feminist authors is important to show that the gender issues they articulate in their literary texts are a reflection of their experiences or of their women friends, sisters or relatives in patriarchal societies.

It is with due consideration that although men wield power in society, they also have their problems of grappling with feminist ideologies and at the same time, trying to live up to African traditional expectations. I observed this during the data elicitation process. Therefore, there is need to come up with a feminism that will go a long way in helping men to be looked at by women as not the source of **all**(I deliberately put **all** in bold to show where attention should be directed) women's problems. As a result, I advocate for a study that will juxtapose, without bias, women and men's problems in society. Thus a study of that nature should be carried out on how other literary texts written by either male or female authors depict the treatment of both men and women in society. Having said that, more study and activism is required to counter the oppressive power relations encoded in gender stereotypes and presumed male privilege.

8.7 Strengths and weaknesses of the study

Throughout the study, attempts were made to understand selected participants' perceptions, experiences and meanings they deduced from the feminist literary texts they were engaged with. The different responses they made from the literary texts were accepted as they were. This is the strength of this study because the actual voices of lecturers and students were presented. Furthermore, the feminist paradigm and some pertinent aspects of the critical paradigm which were embedded added strength to this study. The study was critical in the sense that it aimed at changing the status quo in the undergraduate English curriculum by conscientising lecturers and students on the need for adding more feminist literary texts. These texts are important in that they address gender issues that are topical, globally. However, a theoretical limitation of the study was a tendency to discuss gender in terms of its biological male and female only, any other gender constructs were not considered in this study. However, this does not weaken the argument of the study as the main focus was on the attitudes of male and female participants.

8.8 Conclusion

The chapter discussed the research findings, recommendations to lecturers, recommendations for further study, and contributions to the body of knowledge and strengths and weaknesses of the study. The study made suggestions to lecturers, chairpersons of departments and to deans of faculties on how lecturers can incorporate more feminist literary texts in the university undergraduate English curriculum. This study illuminated not an end to women and girls' problems but presented a means to liberate them from patriarchal bondage.

It was worthy studying in the hope of contributing to gender sensitivity in the universities' undergraduate English curricula in Zimbabwe. Therefore, the findings from this study hoped to change the status quo in the undergraduate English curriculum by adding more feminist literary texts. By so doing, this helps restore female perspectives and extend knowledge about women's experiences, their emancipation, and as well as their contributions to positive cultural changes in Zimbabwe. As lecturers and students engage in discussions, a platform for appreciating each other's gender would be opened.

I discovered through my numerous readings during this research that there are different feminisms; however, they are unanimous about the emancipation of women and reinforce the agenda of this study.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

CONSENT LETTER FOR PATICIPANTS

College of Humanities,
University of KwaZulu-Natal,
Edgewood Campus.

Dear Participant

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

My name is Winnet Chindedza. I am a Curriculum Studies PhD candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus, South Africa. I am interested in learning about gender attitudes towards feminist literary texts. To gather the information, I am interested in asking you some questions.
Please note that:

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your inputs will not be attributed to you in person, but reported only as a population member opinion.
- The interview may last for about 1 hour and may be split depending on your preference.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalised for taking such an action.
- The research aims at knowing how students and lecturers react to literary texts written by feminist writers.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- If you are willing to be interviewed, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the interview to be recorded by the following equipment:

	willing	Not willing
Audio equipment		
Photographic equipment		
Video equipment		

I can be contacted at:
Email:winnetchindedza8@gmail.com
Cell:+27761926984 or +263772669421

My supervisor is Professor Ayub Sheik, who is located at the School of Education, Edgewood Campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.
Contact details: email:sheika@ukzn.ac.za. Phone number:0312603138 or 0745845221

You may also contact the Research Office through:
P. Mohun
HSSREC Research Office,
Tel: 031 260 4557 E-mail: mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

<u>DECLARATION</u>

I………………………………………………………………… (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT   DATE

………………………………   …………………………………

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR LECTURERS

I have some questions that I would want to ask you about the feminist literary texts you are teaching.

1. Which group(s) are you teaching?

2. How many of these texts are you teaching?

3. How many male-authored texts are you teaching?

4. Why the difference?

5. Who selects the feminist texts that are in your English curriculum?

6. Why did you select these authors?

7. Do you enjoy teaching these texts?

8. Why?

9. From your experience as a lecturer, would you say students like studying these texts?

10. Why would you say that?

11. What interests you most about these feminist texts?

12. What do the works imply about the possibilities of sisterhood as a model of resisting patriarchy?

13. What do these texts say about women's creativity?

14. What does the history of the works' reception by the public and the critics tell us about the operation of patriarchy?

15. What can you say about these feminist authors and their writings?

16. How is the relationship between men and women portrayed?

17. Does the study of such texts help your students in any way?

18. Why would you say so?

19. What about yourself?

20. Why do you say so?

21. Would you advocate for more of these feminists literary texts in the undergraduate English curriculum?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION.

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR STUDENTS

I have a few questions that I would like to ask about the feminist literary texts that you are studying.

1. How many feminist texts are you studying?

2. How many male-authored texts are you studying?

3. Why do you think the situation is like this?

4. Do you enjoying reading/studying these texts?

5. Why?

6. What can you say about the themes explored in these texts and what you are taught at home and at church?

7. What can you say about the portrayal of female characters in the texts?

8. Why?

9. Given the choice, would you advocate for the inclusion of more female feminist literary texts in the undergraduate English curriculum in universities?

10. Why?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION.

APPENDIX D

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

I have a few questions for discussion on the feminist literary texts you are studying.

1. What comments do you have on *Second Class Citizen, So Long A Letter and Nervous Conditions?*

2. What can you say about the portrayal of male characters in the feminist literary texts?

3. What can you say about the portrayal of female characters in the feminist literary texts?

4. Why do you think male characters in the texts behave the way they do?

5. How are male and female roles defined?

6. What are the power relationships between men and women, or characters assuming male/female roles?

7. Why do you think female characters in the texts behave the way they do?

8. Can you justify the inclusion of feminist literary texts in your English curriculum?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION.

APPENDIX E

BACHELOR OF EDUCATION HONORS DEGREE (B.Ed. HONS)

DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM STUDIES

COURSE CODE: CSE 213: ENGLISH LITERATURE

PART 1 SEMESTER 2(2015)

TEXTS TO BE STUDIED

1. Bessie Head- *Maru*

2. Buchi Emecheta-*Second Class Citizen*

3. Ngugi Wa Thiongo-*A Grain of Wheat*

4. Thomas Hardy-*Tess of the D'Urbervilles*

5. Alexander Kanengoni-*Echoing Silences*

6. Zakes Mda-*The Madonna of Excelsior*

7. Mariama Ba-*So Long A Letter*

8. D. H. Lawrence-*Sons and Lovers*

9. Chenjerai Hove-*Bones*

10. Tsitsi Dangarembga-*Nervous Conditions*

11. Ama Ata Aidoo-*Dilemma of a ghost*

12. Edward Albee-*The Zoo Story*

APPENDIX F

12 February 2015

Mrs Winnet Chindedza 213574269
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mrs Chindedza

Protocol reference number: HSS/0054/015D
Project title: Gender attitudes towards feminist literature: University lecturers and students engagement with feminist literary texts

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received on 3 February 2015, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted FULL APPROVAL.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/pm

Cc Supervisor: Prof A Sheik
Cc Academic Leader Research: Professor P Morojele
Cc School Administrator: Ms T Khumalo

APPENDIX G

Registrar
Ms S. Tirivanhu
P O Box 1235
MASVINGO
Tel: 039-252199
Fax: 039-252100

Off Old Great Zimbabwe Road
MASVINGO
E mail: stirivanhu@gzu.ac.zw

GREAT ZIMBABWE UNIVERSITY

4 September 2014

Mrs W. Chindedza
University of Kwazulu-Natal
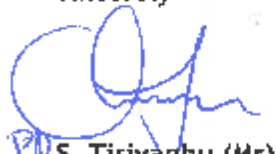Edgewood Campus
Yellowood Flat
Room Y69

Dear Mrs Chindedza

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH WITH GREAT ZIMBABWE UNIVERSITY

The above matter refers.

This is to confirm that your request has been approved, but please note that we would request a copy of your findings too.

Wishing you good luck in your studies.

Sincerely

S. Tirivanhu (Ms)
Registrar

GREAT ZIMBABWE UNIVERSITY
REGISTRAR'S DEPARTMENT

0 4 SEP 2014

P.O. BOX 1235, MASVINGO
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Turnitin Originality Report

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