

**FEMALE CHARACTERS' RESISTANCE TO MASCULINE STEREOTYPES
IN ASENATH ODAGA'S SELECTED NOVELS**

BY

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DECLARATION AND APPROVAL

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my family members for the invaluable support they gave me throughout the period of research. I express my gratitude to my dear wife, Olivia Ngara; my beloved sons, Charles Okea and Peter Otieno; my dad Charles Ogolla Sigera; my mum, Robina Khainza; and my brother, Daniel Sigera.

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ABSTRACT

The study explores resistance to masculine stereotypes as depicted in Asenath Odaga's selected novels with the idea that the female characters resist and reject the masculine stereotypes resulting from the deep-seated patriarchal organization of the African society. Stereotypes against women exist in literary texts and the society as well. The study exposes the masculine stereotypes that exist and therefore provides a platform for resistance against such stereotypes which have always frustrated women's liberation owing to the presence of deep-seated patriarchal underpinnings. The specific objectives that guide the study are to: analyze the masculine stereotypes targeting female characters, examine literary style in female characters' resistance to masculine stereotypes and investigate the thematic concerns in female characters' resistance to masculine stereotypes. The research employs the theories of gynocriticism and radical feminism. Gynocriticism theory as fronted by Elaine Showalter was invented in 1979 and it seeks to establish a literary tradition of women without incorporating male authors. It advocates for setting an independent tradition for female writers that does not incorporate androcentric assumptions; in other words, setting as a rational methodology of dealing with the woman writer as a genius intellectual who produces textual meanings. Gynocriticism is therefore concerned with identifying topics and themes in literature written by women. Radical feminism as espoused by Ti Grace Atkinson was founded in the 1970s and it attributes women's suffering to patriarchy. It calls for the total overhaul of patriarchy and oppression. The study is based on analytical research design. The study area is restricted to two novels written by Asenath Bole Odaga, *Between the Years* (1987) and *Endless Road* (1995) since they are against masculine stereotypes. The target population consists of the two novels purposively sampled from the six that the author has written as at the time of study. The sample size is determined by taking 30% of the six novels. The primary data is sourced from the two novels while secondary data is from library and online research. Data is analysed through close reading and textual analysis. Data is presented in continuous prose. The study is significant in bridging the gender gap that feminists are not trying to out-power men but are engaging in a quest for humane relations. The study of gender representation is an occasion to show the injustices meted against women and it demonstrates how women have been portrayed through gender stereotypes which eventually influence the treatment of women in the entire world and suggests a remedy for fairness. The study has established the presence of gender stereotypes against women, it has also shown how female characters circumvent the stereotypes by having an emboldened stance against male dominance and further the study has gone ahead to present how Asenath Odaga depicts women characters at the end, denoting the triumph of the female gender against the masculine stereotypes.

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OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Masculine

Masculine refers to attributes, behaviours and roles associated with boys and men. It is often associated with power that disregards consequences and responsibility. Masculinity is linked with traits such as strength, independence, leadership, courage and assertiveness.

Resistance

Resistance refers to countering or refusal to accept a patriarchal system that gives men privileges, results from a gendered socialization process in all areas of our lives in the realm of social, economic, ideological, cultural, political, and spiritual factors. Resistance therefore ensures a defeat of patriarchy which is a political-social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everyone deemed weak especially females, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence.

Stereotypes

Stereotypes are inaccurate or negative generalizations that are normally associated with the female gender in terms of their roles in the society. When individuals apply gender assumptions to others regardless of evidence to the contrary, they are perpetuating gender stereotyping. Individuals are always aware of the dangers of gender stereotyping yet they continue to make these generalizations.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0. Introduction

This chapter examines the background of the study, biography of the author, statement of the problem, research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitations of the study, and the theoretical framework.

1.1. Background of the Study

The study is an exploration of resistance to masculine stereotypes in Asenath Odaga's selected novels with the idea that the female characters resist and reject the masculine stereotypes resulting from the deep-seated patriarchal organization of the African society. The novels analysed are *Between the Years* (1987) and *Endless Road* (1995). The study is a reflection of the cultural aspects that engender the masculine stereotypes against women in the contemporary Kenyan society. Wolf contends that, "literature reflects the prevalent social attitude toward women; and since this attitude so often values men and masculine hobbies, women's concerns seems devalued" (Wolf, 1972, p.205).

Various literary critics have depicted male writers and particularly African ones who have viewed female characters through patriarchal lenses. This therefore places them in the peripheries of important occasions such as decision making in matters of development between the genders. This sort of prejudice has given birth to masculine stereotypes that have been used by elements of patriarchy to trample on the rights and privileges that belong to women. The study shows that women are able to resist the stereotypes through playing an active role.

Ohale (2010) argues that early African literature revolves around literary heavy weights such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Cyprian Ekwensi, Elechi Amadi, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Leopold Senghor, and Sembene Ousmane. The said authors consistently became favourites of Western literary dialogue on modern African literature. High class literary magazines and journals devotedly pursued interviews from the literary giants alongside carrying out assessments of their latest literary works. Such international recognition heightens their place in the global literary sphere. Successful as these authors may be, the scarcity of an elaborate female participant is visible in their fiction which amounts to lack of equilibrium depiction of the African rural life and casting doubt on the prominence of the African woman in the African society. Consequently, feminist critics have decried the patriarchal leaning in such literary texts, argued that women have been pushed to the periphery and at worst objectified. Our study therefore finds a pedestal in which female characters are able to resist masculine stereotypes and negative representation. Odaga's *Between the Years* (1987) and *Endless Road* (1995) provide the roadmap for the analysis.

Asenath Bole Odaga, a creative writer, publisher, star of women emancipation and researcher in African folklore was born in Koguta Location, Nyakach, Kisumu County, Kenya on July 1937. She attended Guu Primary School, Ng'iya Girls Secondary School before proceeding to Alliance Girls High School.

Thereafter she joined Kikuyu Teacher Training College in 1957. After this, she studied at the University of Nairobi graduating in the year 1974. Odaga undertook master's studies in literature in the same university in 1981. Her M. A thesis was on African folklore entitled: "Education Values of the Kenyan Luo Oral Narratives."

Asenath Odaga was one of the pioneer women publishers of written works of art in Kenya. She founded Lake Publishers in Kisumu and the main outlet for her printed works is a bookshop called Thuu-Tinda (which is dholuo for a closing formulae for narratives meaning Amen) situated at Tivoli House in Kisumu's Kenyatta Avenue.

She established an NGO-Gender and Development Centre in the 1980s in an attempt to empower women in literature and finance them using donor funds secured from foreigners. She was able to start self-help groups for women which empowered them through small scale ventures.

As a result of writing she was one of the founder members of Kenya Oral Literature Association (KOLA) and Writers Association of Kenya (WAK).

She specialized in various genres of literature—children stories, short stories, novels, literary criticism and oral literature. Some of her published works include: *The Villager's Son* (1971), *Thu tinda : stories from Kenya* (1980), *Ogilo nungo piny kirom* (1983), *Yesterday's today : a study of oral literature* (1984), *The Shade Changes* (1984), *Nyamgondho wuod ombare gi sigendini luu moko* (1985), *The storm* (1985), *Literature for children and young people in Kenya* (1985), *Munde goes to the market* (1987) with Adrienne Moore *A bridge in time* (1987), *Munde and his friends* (1987), *Between the years* (1987), *Jande's ambition* (1988), *The silver cup* (1988), *The hare's blanket And other stories* (1989), with Adrienne Moore, *Poko nyar migumba : gi sigend luu mamoko* (1989), *The diamond ring* (1989), *The angry flames* (1989), with Adrienne Moore, *The secret of the monkey rock* (1989), *Riana* (1991), *A night on a tree* (1991), *My home* (1991), *The love ash, rosa and other stories* (1992), *Simbi nyaima* (1993), *Basic English-Luo words and phrases* (1993), *Why the hyena has a crooked neck and other stories* (1993), *Endless Road* (1995), *Luo sayings* (1995), *Something for nothing*

(2001), *Mogen jabare* (2003), *Nyangi gi Otis* (2004), *English--Dholuo Dictionary* (2005) and *The Luo oral literature and educational values of its narratives* (2010).

She was married to James Charles Odaga, a trade unionist and were blessed with two children Peter Odaga and Adhiambo Odaga. Asenath Bole Odaga died on 1st December 2014 in Kisumu. Mwanzi (2014) says that Odaga was an illustrious scholar of international reputation who will be missed by the world of children's literature and young adults. She established and ran a press just for that. She advised many women intending to proceed for further studies since she had been a prolific writer.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Stereotypes against women exist in literary texts and the society as well. The study exposes the masculine stereotypes that exist and therefore provides a platform for resistance against such stereotypes which have always frustrated women's liberation owing to the presence of deep-seated patriarchal underpinnings. The study is aimed at identifying stereotypes targeting women that the author has highlighted and how she helps to deconstruct them. Asenath Odaga is a writer who exposes the existence of masculine stereotypes and also provides the escape routes for resistance to them. *Between the Years* and *Endless Road* outline a clear map of stereotype evidences and how the female characters have been able to surmount them. The study discusses how Asenath Odaga's choice of female characters has cast women in significant roles and elevated them as an integral part of development of a strong society built on coexistence of man and woman without prejudice. The study has analysed how female characters have resisted masculine stereotypes and have constantly circumvented the patriarchal obstacles that have downtrodden them from achieving due diligence in promotion of the feminist agenda. Female characters have been stereotyped in the male-dominated society present in the novels under study as weak in leadership, illiterate and

promiscuous, but the study has however shown that it is in fact the males who have contributed to these atrocities labelled on women and therefore women have stood up against these unequal representations of their status in the society. The study is informed by a set of objectives which help in the formulation of research questions.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine the portrayal of female characters' resistance to masculine stereotyping in Asenath Odaga's selected novels.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Analyse masculine stereotypes targeting female characters.
2. Examine literary styles that help present female characters' resistance to masculine stereotyping
3. Investigate the thematic concerns in female characters' resistance to masculine stereotypes.

1.4. Research Questions

The study is guided by the following questions:

1. What are some of the masculine stereotypes that target women in the two texts?
2. How is literary style used to depict female characters' resistance to masculine stereotypes?
3. What thematic concerns do female characters use to resist masculine stereotypes?

1.5. Justification of the Study

Gender relations is a key component of how women and men exist in the society harmoniously. However, stereotypes against the female gender perpetuated by the patriarchal elements of the society has downtrodden women's liberation from oppression and discrimination at the workplace and at home consequently denying them the much needed freedom of expression and association. Women's rights are muted by aspects of masculinity and misogyny.

A change of this social narrative would be ideal in studying how female characters have resisted masculine stereotypes in the selected novels of Asenath Odaga. It will go a long way in creating a conducive environment for women's own existence and harmonious relations with men that is devoid of prejudice and oppression.

1.6. Significance of the Study

The study is significant in bridging the gender gap that feminists are not trying to out-power men but they are engaging in a quest for humane relations. They are not dislodging the masculine ideology. The study of gender representation is an occasion to show the injustices meted against women in the society. The study therefore demonstrates how women have been portrayed through gender stereotypes which eventually influence the treatment of women in the entire world and suggests a remedy for fairness. The study is also significant since Odaga is good in exposing gender stereotyping and how women have surmounted it. She has also not received critical attention and the study is a good attempt to seal this gap.

1.7. Scope of the Study

The study is limited to two novels by Asenath Bole Odaga, namely *Between the Years* (1987) and *Endless Road* (1995). The author has written six novels. The other four novels are: *The Shade Changes* (1984), *A Bridge in Time* (1987), *Something for Nothing* (2001) and *Riana* (1991). The sample size that is arrived at is two out of the six novels that the author has written. Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) say that 10% to 30 % is representative enough of the sample size. 30 % of the six novels yields 1.8, which is rounded off to two novels. This research study is restricted to the two novels above since they are more prominent on female characters' resistance to masculine stereotypes.

Odaga's *A Bridge in Time* is left out of the study mainly because it analyzes the themes of personal misfortunes in the quest for leadership and ancestral inheritance amidst opposition. Similarly, *Riana* though related to the study is left out since it delves into traditions and customs that affect the relationship between men and women in general without any form of resistance to masculine stereotypes. *The Shade Changes* is also not considered since it is a detective mystery novel of a kidnapped bride -to- be. *Something for Nothing* is a play which does not fit the analysis because the study is on Odaga's prose fiction and not on drama while the other creative works by the author are children stories.

1.8. Limitations of the Study

The limitation in this study is that there are not much critical publications in relation to the author's works except for a few tributes and biographies of the author written by news reporters. The other challenge encountered is that we have found only one literary critical study done on Asenath Odaga, "Asenath Bole Odaga's Vision of Gender

Relations in *Endless Road*," by Katsuji Nakamura in the year 1999 whose only presence online is the abstract and we had to find the hard copy at the University of Nairobi library.

Besides these, Asenath Odaga's works are self-published through Lake Publishers, Kisumu and they are therefore subject to typographical errors.

1.9. Theoretical Framework

The study is based on the theories of gynocriticism and radical feminism. Gynocriticism examines women's experiences according to the lenses of women writers as espoused by the literary scholar Elaine Showalter. Showalter (1981) defines gynocriticism as a study of women's writing, including readings of women's texts and analyses of the intertextual relations both between women writers, and between women and men. She presents gynocriticism as a way to construct a female framework for the analysis of women's literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience rather than to adapt male models and theories. Showalter identifies two tenets of gynocriticism as follows:

The first type whose subjects include the images and stereotypes of women in literature, the omissions and misconceptions about women in criticism, and the fissures in male constructed literary history. It is also concerned with the exploitation and manipulation of the female audience, especially in popular culture and film; and with the analysis of woman-as-sign in semiotic systems. The second type of feminist criticism is concerned with *woman as writer* - with woman as the producer of textual meaning, with the history, themes, genres and structures of literature by women. (Showalter, 1985, p.125-143).

Showalter continues to say that gynocriticism strives to set up an independent feminine literary tradition devoid of androcentric assumptions and focuses on the woman's brilliant production of literary meanings with exclusive feminine element.

Similarly, the study has set an independent tradition by a female writer who propels prominent female characters resisting masculine stereotypes and therefore they can only chart their destiny by surmounting hurdles on their way to success and in this Showalter's ideas are useful. The gynocritic is concerned with singling out issues and thematic concerns which are distinctively feminine in women's literature.

The reality of domesticity for example, or the unique familiarity of maturation, bearing a child, and fostering, or mother-daughter and woman to woman association whereby sentimental matters and not exterior engagement are the core concerns.

Showalter identifies three phases of gynocriticism as female, feminine and feminist which are all relevant to the study. In the feminine phase female writers opted to conform to male values. The feminist phase whereby women rebel against male standards (stereotypes) and patriarchal ideology that sets favourable standards and norms for men while at the same time setting unfavourable standards, norms and values for women reflects how Seruya Apisi and Salmarie have resisted stereotypes based on infidelity, illiteracy and inability to lead in *Between the Years* and *Endless Road*. It is also worth considering the female phase for the study since it is a development where a female identity operates in a free space stripped of patriarchal designations and standpoints. The feminine phase and the female phase all meet the demands of the first, second and third objectives of the study, that is, resistance to stereotypes, literary styles depicting female resistance to masculine stereotypes and thematic concerns used by female characters to resist masculine stereotypes.

Showalter's tenets of gynocriticism provide a profound platform of analysis for the study. The first tenet is concerned with the feminist as a reader and it marks the images and stereotypes of women in literature, the omissions and misconceptions about women

in criticism, and woman-as-sign in semiotic systems. The study identifies the female characters' resistance to masculine stereotypes and this is our first objective since the writer, Asenath Odaga, presents various misconceptions about female characters that are purely as a result of patriarchal dominance of the society that the characters come from.

The female characters in the study are presented as inadequate in terms of education, lacking leadership skills and also promiscuous. The study shows that female characters can indeed circumvent these images and stereotypes through resistance.

The second tenet of gynocriticism is engendered on the study of the woman as a writer whose subjects are the history, styles, themes, genres and structures of writing by women; the psychodynamics of female creativity; the trajectory of the individual or collective female career; and the evolution and laws of a female literary tradition. The present study in this case identifies the literary aesthetics or styles and themes that are relevant in heightening the female characters' resistance to masculine stereotypes in *Between the Years* and *Endless Road*.

Other scholars in the wider feminism theory have also contributed to the development of gynocriticism which entirely is essential for this study. Kaas (2014) argues that Susan Gubar's and Sandra Gilbert's *The Madwoman in the Attic* examines a trope found in 19th –century literature. Gilbert and Gubar opined that all female characters in novels written by men can be branded as either angels or monsters, implying that such literary characters were either untainted and subservient or sensual, recalcitrant and irrepressible.

Plate (2016) opines that gynocriticism elevates the topic of canons-of a conventional male literary body and its inattention to gender, of women's literature relationship, of a

discussion between male and female canons, and of the importance of female canon.

She says that:

gynocriticism is linked to feminist efforts to get women into print, with the search for women writers and the recovery of lost texts, the teaching of courses about women's writing, and the establishment of feminist publishing houses. (Plate, 2016, p.2).

The study also employs radical feminism theory as espoused by Ti Grace Atkinson. The theory believes that all women's problems are as a result of patriarchy and oppression. This therefore calls for radical elimination of patriarchy in all its forms and manifestations in order to create equilibrium for women. Atkinson observes that:

A human being is not born from the womb; it must create itself. It must be free, self-generative. A human being must feel that it can grow in a world where injustice, inequity, hatred, sadism are not directed at it. No person can grow into a life within these conditions; it is enough of a miracle to survive as a functioning organism. (Atkinson, 1974, p.5)

1.10. Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, significance and justification of the study, scope and limitations of the study and the theoretical framework upon which the study is anchored on. In the following chapter we shall examine the literature review of this study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0. Introduction

The literature review in this chapter is divided on three main topics that cover the critical studies that have been done about gender stereotyping and masculinity namely: Masculine stereotypes in literary works, literary style in depiction of female characters' resistance to masculine stereotypes, and thematic concerns in female characters' resistance to masculine stereotypes.

2.1. Masculine Stereotypes in Literary Works

Whistler (2001) underscores the reality that women have been given a raw deal in representation in terms of acquisition of education. The stereotype of illiteracy is constantly hovering around them like the sword of Damocles. She observes that:

Through their writing both of these authors attempt to bring to light the unfairness that still exists between genders regarding education in Africa. Although both writers were able to eventually receive an education, they realize that many of their African sisters do not and will not have the same opportunities unless someone speaks up for them--at least until they learn to speak for themselves. (Whisler, 2001, p.2)

Similarly, Whistler continues to observe in *Continuing Gender Discrimination-The Journey to Female Evolution* that in Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, Makuchi's *Your Madness, Not Mine*, and Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* male characters are the ones who first welcome the colonial ways of life. The women on the other end either vehemently reject the penetration of colonial principles or quietly internalize their disapproval. These women seem to suffer from double oppression from the colonialists and from African men.

The studies above are relevant to the study on Odaga's novels since they help to paint a picture of women who have been downtrodden by their male counterparts but then Odaga's characters unlike the others have resisted patriarchy. Female characters such as Salmarie in *Endless Road* and Seruya in *Between the Years* have embraced education despite resistance from their male relations. The women, against the odds, have acquired the requisite education standards needed for modern times and they have even surpassed the expectations and by so doing the gap of ignorance is filled by the study. Whistler as we observe and through the works of Odaga debunks the stereotype of male dominance and ignorance.

Muhammed (2007) opines that in pre-independence Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the society was impatient with women whose substantial contribution to societal issues revolved around song and dance ceremonies. The women at that time occupied no high or heroic space and would thus not be appropriated any much weight in literary spheres. As a matter of fact, women in this society were practically reduced to the level of second class members of their society. It is no wonder that Unoka, Okonkwo's father, even though valueless in the society, his character is somewhat developed while the character of Okonkwo's mother is muted. The stereotype is that of a woman relegated to dance and ceremony, to the margins and peripheries while the man is strategically placed at the centre. In view of Muhammed's opinion, the study interrogates why the male is elevated at the expense of the female and the remedy therein to counter this atrocity against women in the selected novels by Bole Odaga. The stereotype debunked here is inability to lead effectively. Songs and dances are also important as well in the society.

Uwakweh (1995) in *Debunking Patriarchy: The Liberational Quality of Voicing in Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions*, says that Dangarembga examines the necessity for African women writers to champion their cause in the character, Lucia. Uwakweh's voice in this work is on liberating women from the shackles of patriarchy. Lucia is a character that stands for women's liberation and she is a symbol of resistance to male domination. Uwakweh's work is important to this study as it espouses the tenets of self-determination for the female character in a marginalized environment. The researcher in this study points out why the female character must champion her cause by being strong as seen in the female characters in Odaga's novels. The stereotype debunked here also is that of inability to lead.

In addition, Graves (1998) also observes that Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *The River Between* portrays a woman who is subdued in her search for freedom. Muthoni faces tragedy while seeking for circumcision which to her is a form of emancipation. She dies from a septic wound that refuses to heal soon after undergoing female circumcision. Contrary to this, Waiyaki's circumcision is without incident. The study notes that this is an unfair representation of the woman and female characters are presented by Asenath Odaga's selected novels as resisting unfair representation by confronting the masculine stereotypes.

Chun (1958) in *The Role of Women in Things Fall Apart* examines Okonkwo as a tragic hero of the novel whose "whole life was dominated by the fear of failure and weakness" (Chun, 1958, p. 16). Okonkwo scorned anything feeble or frail, and his account of his community and his family generally intimates that Ibo society equates strength to men and frailty to women. For Okonkwo, Nwoye, his son is woman-like and thus synonymous to Unoka, Okonkwo's father.

Such conclusion is drawn by Okonkwo when Nwoye becomes a Christian convert. Okonkwo wonders how he, “a flaming fire could have begotten a son like Nwoye, degenerate and effeminate?” (143). On the reverse, his daughter Ezinma (the favourite of all Okonkwo’s children) “should have been a boy!” (61) and hence the favourite of all Okonkwo’s children. Yet generally the woman self is despised in Igbo society and objectified. A case in point is the severe beating of Ekwefi by her husband, after failing to come home early to cook his food.

Chun (ibid) continues to assert that Achebe however designates vital roles for the women characters in the novels such as that of painting *egwugwu*’s houses. More importantly, the significance of the woman is heightened when Okonkwo is exiled by his people and now has to return to his motherland. His uncle, Uchendu explains the situation thus:

A man belongs to his fatherland when things are good and life is sweet. But when there is sorrow and bitterness he finds refuge in his motherland. A man has both joy and sorrow in his life and when the bad times come his mother is always there to comfort him. Thus comes the saying ‘Mother is Supreme’ (Achebe,1958, p.94)

Chun’s contribution to the present study is that while it advocates for supremacy of motherland during the time of distress for males the study gives a proactive role in bridging the gender disparity in the society. Salmarie and Seruya in the selected Odaga novels have dedicated their lives to a just society that respects the rights and privileges that should be accorded women devoid of the stereotypes and prejudice.

Mutero (1999) on her part draws the vice emanating from traditional folktales which shapes the girl child into accepting that the marital institution is the way of life. Mutero essentially interrogates the questions around negative portrayal of girls in folktales. The study on Odaga’s portrayal of female characters’ resistance to masculine stereotypes is

that women do not just accept marriage as a way of life but they go ahead to question its suitability in view of the relations between the man and the woman and that they have to coexist with mutual understanding for instance Seruya and Jaoko as well as Salmarie and Dino. Mutero's work reveals that women only survive because of marriage and this is relevant to the study since it goes ahead to prove that marriage cannot hold our women in the form of bondage and this is its significance.

Furthermore, Oduol and Obote (1992) rewrite several Kenyan folktales to attain gender sensitivity in the said folktales. The supposition directing the rewriting process is that women are unpleasantly portrayed in oral narratives and therefore there is need to free them from the archaic negative depictions. Their belief is that folktales usually perpetuate mythology of male dominance while also offering justification for the existence of gender inequalities. The work in this study calls for radical removal of all gender inequalities. Their study is relevant to the work since it calls for a new way of re-looking at gender representation, female characters have to resist masculine stereotypes.

Besides, Koziel (2016) observes that the general insights into various female characters in all the works of the contemporary writer of Nigerian origin, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, from her debut novel about a patriarchal Igbo family *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), *For Love of Biafra* (1998), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009), through *Americana* (2013) and *We Should All Be Feminists* (2014) gives the impression of social and cultural phenomena as well as the author's feminist approach. Koziel continues to say that one sees in Adichie's works, the leading themes such as follows: traditionally ascribed female social and gender roles, motherhood, family,

raising of children and masculine practices among others. Koziel's views are relevant to the study as these are the same themes that Asenath Bole Odaga presents in her works.

Odaga being a feminist similarly presents the same in *Endless Road* (1995) and *Between the Years* (1987) however she proceeds to project these themes in a manner that shows resistance to masculine stereotypes.

Similarly, Etyang (2015) observes that ogre stories have presented women as being weak and always deceived by ogres. In an ogre narrative it is the man who always saves the woman. Contrary to this study, it is actually the woman that saves the family and by extension the man who is embroiled in patriarchal obstinacy. Etyang's study is significant to this work in that it revolutionizes the reality of mutual understanding between the male and female, they must work together to heal them from stereotypes and the females must resist them in case of lack of support from males.

Equally important, Anyango et al. (2018) underscore the grim reality that the role of women in politics has not been given the limelight it deserves in the records of Kenyan political landscape since time immemorial. This is as a result of unavailability of women chroniclers at that time and also due to the dominance of patriarchal system at the time and this led to the women's apathy. Their study reveals that irrespective of political presence women have emerged to take frontier roles. Their work is relevant to this study since Odaga's major female characters have taken cue and are going for political seats and contests.

On the other hand, Ohale (2010) singles out education as a fundamental liberating tool that nurtures empowerment for the African woman and places her at an advantage in times of crises. Education has thus got rid of women's ignorance by providing many options and alternatives for them thus eradicating defeatist tendencies.

A classic case of this situation is exemplified in Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* where Adah eschews, albeit discreetly confronting her parents-in-law so that she may achieve her ambition of reuniting with her spouse in England.

The current study examines the place of education as a tool for women liberators to use for emancipation as it is shown in the female characters' achievements in Odaga's works under study. Ohale's contribution in line with education provides impetus for women emancipation but the study goes ahead to prove how the characters have taken advantage of the spaces of freedom offered by education. Seruya is ready to use her education as a stand-alone character should her husband Apon bolt out of the marriage in *Between the Years* while Salmarie uses education to fight male envy against her success in *Endless Road*. The stereotype being fought as we observe is that of ignorance.

On her part, Joey (2015) observes that women rebel polygamy in *So Long a Letter* through the character of Aissatou; she at full throttle left Mawdo Ba once he got a second wife and looked forward on her life. He assumed that Aissatou would simply stay and accept her co-wife. But she stood by a decision which was uncommon in that polygamous society. Though she was advised to compromise and threatened of the unknown future she took notice of none. She just left him there with only a letter. While Mariama Ba's work entails the female characters charting their own destiny by moving out of a failing marriage, Asenath Odaga's works highlight characters who stay in marriage but define their space—a space that is equal to that of the male characters. The stereotype of women not satisfied with solving marital issues within the marriage institution is challenged in this review.

Another critic, Mutunda (2007) concerns himself with a category of women who have become a source of pain for fellow women in the works of Mariama Ba and he refers to them as victimizers. These are the characters who have ensured that gains made in female characters' resistance to masculine stereotypes are lost, he argues that:

It is clear that in her criticism of African societies with regard to marriage, Ba exposes the patriarchal oppression of women. However, in addition to denouncing certain masculine behaviors in her novels, Ba also examines critically the role of some women -especially those of the older generation- in a couple's life, revealing comportment that contributes to victimizing the wife. (Mutunda, 2007, p.100)

The thesis argues with his view but transcends it to project the idea that the older generation of women has in fact enhanced female characters' resistance to masculine stereotypes which is our point of departure from his study. Seruya's mother (Maritha) plays a role in her development while Flora, Salmarie's mother-in-law provides the political support that is much needed in the respective novels. We debunk the theory that sometimes women are their own enemies in matters gender representation.

Furthermore, Makokha (2015) says that Macgoye propels the position of the Kenyan women by emancipating them through her fiction. Paulina in *Coming to Birth* for instance is optimistic that she will get a child even after all the miscarriages. She is also the embodiment of the role of women in the anti-colonial and post-colonial struggle in Kenya. Martin, Paulina's husband, starts off this marriage on wrong footing but it gradually stabilizes and Paulina ends up pregnant and bears a child after twenty years of struggle. Hope thus blossoms at the end of the novel. Makokha's view is that Macgoye's inclusion of male characters in the novel illuminate to the challenges women face at the hands of men. In eliminating such hindrances, the African woman is emancipated and can now achieve her full potential when patriarchal menace has been pulverized.

The research benefits from Makokha's work in that it calls for a unity of purpose in the relationship between the woman and the man. There is peace and tranquility only when an agreement is established between the two. Similarly, this study is of the opinion that oppression only stops for the female character when there is dialogue and not confrontation due to male dominance. This review debunks the theory of patriarchy.

Moreover, Bakuno (2015) discusses women emancipation in Francis Imbuga's play *Aminata*. Throughout the play women such as Aminata and Rosina struggle to liberate themselves from their archaic culture that makes them subordinate to their men. Aminata eats chicken and its soup at an event held by her father to show women that they are supposed to eat chicken contrary to their culture. She is a lawyer and not a housewife. Rosina becomes a Head of Membe, the very first female leader in the history of Membe breaking Kesia's argument obviously because she is indoctrinated to believe so by the culture she is in, that the stool of Membe is not meant for females. Bakuno's assertions are similar to the study in this research since the female characters in Odaga's work are fighting for their own freedom out of bondage that is as a result of patriarchy. However, the difference in this study is that the freedom sought by female characters is by radical means. Bakuno's review debunks the stereotype of ignorance and inability to lead.

In addition to what other critics say, Mabel (2001) contributes that female writers pitch their writings within the confines of domestic surrounding, suggesting that patriarchal make-up of the society is warranted in expunging women from public circle. Their thematic concerns revolve around love, marriage, motherhood, barrenness, marital perfidy and rape. It is apt to concur with Mabel since it is evident that hurdles are

constantly placed on the path of women by patriarchy and therefore they have to rise up against all these.

The study benefits from this fact. Mabel's point is on focus as Odaga's resistance is radical to patriarchy as it is reflected in the study. However, the point of departure with this study is that female characters actually venture into politics for freedom from male domination and hence debunking the stereotype of inability to lead and patriarchal domination. The stereotype of barrenness is often labelled on women in the patriarchal African society; however, the study debunks this stereotype since on the contrary men are also contributors to barrenness. In *Endless Road* Dino is not able to procreate and this is because he suffers erectile dysfunction. It takes concerted efforts of Salmarie for him to be healed traditionally. The gap filled in the study is that infertility is not solely a woman's problem but a shared function.

The masculine stereotypes in this section such as illiteracy being associated with women, double oppression, inability to lead and relegation to the margins and peripheries have been identified in this section and therefore the study expounds on how female characters have resisted them in chapter four. The criticisms under review are using feminist theories to debunk the patriarchal ideologies that are androcentric in the items presented and the research draws the line of departure from the said ideologies. The research therefore interrogates how a woman writer, Asenath Bole Odaga, depicts main female characters as fighting and struggling for their gender space. In order to buttress the feminist theories being fronted by the mentioned critics, our work on the contrary adopts the theory of gynocriticism as the angle of analysis in the female characters' resistance to masculine stereotypes.

2.2. Literary Style Depicting Female Characters' Resistance to Masculine Stereotypes

The section discusses the literary styles that are critical in heightening the position of the female in texts as presented by critics and the relation to female characters' resistance to masculine stereotypes evident in *Between the Years* and *Endless Road*. These styles are important in manipulation of language to achieve the aesthetic effect while at the same time depicting resistance.

Ogbazi (2011) notes that stylistic devices are key in propelling the author to pass messages to the audience. The study presents relevant examples of styles that enhances Odaga's vision of gender. In this respect Ogbazi observes that:

through techniques a writer achieves actuality and resemblance, making her creative works true to life and therefore highly practical. They, moreover, make her work intense since the readers are attached to both persuasion of the characters as well as the unnatural and disastrous circumstances they are ensnared in (Ogbazi, 2011, p.67)

Asenath Odaga as an African writer has integrated peculiar styles in writing her novels. It is the power of her fusion that gives an outstanding aesthetic authority to her works.

The African novel depicts the African society as being largely patriarchal and driven by masculinity thoughts. The examination of the position of the woman in African novels is thus critical. Cartey (1971) pushes the African woman to peripheral geographies and only sees the woman as representing instability. Cartey identifies symbolism as a style representing instability. The mythical story of creation and fictitious image of Africa preserves the house as the only space a woman should occupy. The myth of creation in this case falls under narratology since it is built on the premise of the woman as a second thought.

Cartey's observation that women are restricted to the home environment in view of the research study is patriarchal in nature and that's why the study of Odaga's novels seeks to dispel it as a myth and asserts that the woman must leave the comfort zone and fight for her rightful place.

Similarly, Cartey continues to observe that an emancipated female character is the one who dismantles the patriarchal status quo. Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* (1966) depicts the lead character Efuru as an irrepressible woman who is ready to forfeit her marriage and plunge into forlornness; a price she is willing to pay because she cannot conceive. Efuru is recalcitrant, decisive and desires to disrupt the societal norms in a bid to shape her own future. She remains indifferent to obstacles presented to her by both female and male characters. Cartey's view that a woman can develop without a man is totally different from Odaga's because for Odaga there is development when the two come together however difficult the situation.

In a review of Cyprian Ekwensi's works Cartey also points out the worst and most disheartening state of fragments of post-colonial African society focusing on typecast feminine descriptions. In *Jagua Nana* (1961), Ekwensi presents Jagua, a successful courtesan woman. She is multifaceted; a wife, mother, prostitute as well as a breadwinner in her household. There is contrast that is brought about by vivid descriptions in Ekwensi's work and that of Odaga's. Jagua Nana resorts to prostitution for financial independence. Seruya, in Odaga's *Between the Years*, also does the same with her lover, Tim, but as a form of resistance to Apon's promiscuity and patriarchal hegemony.

Besides that, Pfaff (1982) argues that *Xala* (1975) has interweaved metaphors that relate to reality of the world. Both literature and film, it is argued, depict women as being

defined by men. *Xala*, at the beginning seems to flow with the societal status quo only to detour and reveal that the film envisions women characters who are not just mere appendages to El Hadji. In fact, the women characters are core in his social ascension and eventual decline. These characters thus qualify as major characters because of their pivotal role in the society. Their physical and conceptual facets are prominent in equal measure as that of the male protagonist. Ousmane's work is significant to the study since it elaborates the specific role that the female character plays as an agent of change and this critical stance is what Odaga advances in her works as it is proven in the characters of Seruya and Salmarie.

In addition, Stratton (2003) says that conventional feminist responses to Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* are unsettled by an unfixed, third-person narrative that maps the life of one woman, and the cultural and self-constructed expectations of motherhood to which she is subjected. The maternal body itself directs the narrative, which is structured around the ability of its central character, Nnu Ego, to bear children. While the novel comprises a sequence of realizations as Nnu Ego antagonizes individual and communal crises, it is not a quest novel in the strictest sense of European convention. Nnu Ego is not out to attain emancipation but rather, hers is a quest to sire multiple male children who will nest her during her sunset times. Her dependence upon her maternal body to provide her with identity, status and, finally, personal welfare, defies the conventions of the Euro-American feminist quest in which women's pre-ordained roles as wives and mothers are consciously overturned. Instead, Nnu Ego is a representative of women who from the onset of their lives are classified as possessions. Their worth is anticipated at the puberty stage when they can now start bearing children, preferably male ones. If at this stage their wombs are dry their value is vanquished because they cannot achieve motherhood. While relating the crisis of motherhood that

destroys the life of Nnu Ego, the unstable narrative itself exposes the difficulties of defining female subjectivity beyond the constraints of fertility and motherhood. Consequently, the troubles that Nnu Ego encounters in her life are mirrored in the text, which seems either unable or unwilling to fix female identity beyond the condition of motherhood. Emecheta is a seasoned writer in matters regarding marriage and motherhood which she classifies as modern slavery.

According to Stratton, Nnu Ego in *The Joys of Motherhood*, is a resilient and ardent worker though the money she fetches does not correspond to her basic needs of food for instance and her yearning to educate her children. The stable love she has for her progeny brings forth an entanglement and emotional oppression that is inescapable. The story interconnects marriage, motherhood, slavery and colonization to annex a distinctive literary treatise that can be related by other women writers of the Black Diaspora. Odaga's works on the other hand interpret how the woman manoeuvres marriage upheavals and leadership battles in order to be at par with the dominant male character.

Stratton continues to say that the feminine imagery of Africa occurs in both anti-colonial, and colonial literary engagements. The designation of the Mother Africa trope by anticolonial men writers, Africa is habitually signified as the figure of a woman, who on the one hand is young, beautiful, and fertile, and on the other, "raped", degraded, and impoverished. Stratton argues that these contradictory images barely reflect authentic issues about the economic and political place of women, but instead depict a forecast of the deprivation that feels because of colonization. Regardless, mothers and motherhood continue to hold an enigmatic position in both male and female authored Black literature. While in *The Joys of Motherhood* the woman is subdued, the one in Odaga's is assertive, she fights and does not let nature take its natural course. Stratton's work

informs the study in the research that female characters as presented by Odaga are radicals who have to fight all manner of discrimination by males as a way of freedom. Imagery as a literary style in the criticism reveals the kind of discrimination that the African women face as a result of colonization.

In a parallel reading of *The Joys of Motherhood* with Alice Walker's *Meridian*, Barbara (1985) asserts that matrilineal connection is an important theme for women writers of the Black Diaspora because it counters the damage to the family caused by slavery and European colonization. To Barbara, textual representations of the joys and sorrows of motherhood are capable of emphasizing the historical and cultural connections amongst Black women worldwide. But, possibly because of the apparent permanence of motherhood in the face of unrelenting political and social change, African male writers have represented women as politically static and ahistorical. The research paints a picture of women who are politically dominant and agile in championing for the rights of women.

Consequently, Kumbasu (2007) says that in *Song of Lawino*, Lawino's intellect is manifested when she juxtaposes European and African customs and standards. Seemingly, she appropriates the goodness of the two opposing cultures exclusively to their owners arguing that a new tradition cannot be acclimatized by a stranger. She therefore sees the European culture as detrimental to the African person and as such elevates the worth of the African traditions. The dominant motif is the evaluation of the 'graceful giraffe', which represents the exquisiteness of African women, and the 'monkey' which symbolizes the unattractiveness of white breed and the attendant copycats. The study on Asenath Odaga's works is however on the idea that the female character has to value herself and provide her own discovery of points of strength. Kumbasu's work is useful to the study as female characters presented in Odaga's works

are seen to be critically concerned with the differences existing in the society that have all along led to their exploitation. The study is therefore changing the narrative of male domination in Odaga's novels.

In conclusion this section has analyzed the critics' position of female characters in various texts by African criticisms on writers through a number of literary styles such as symbolism, vivid descriptions, metaphors, narrative point of view, imagery and juxtapositions.

2.3. Thematic Concerns in Female Characters' Resistance to Masculine Stereotypes

The area of literature review revolves around the themes that are key in exposing female characters' resistance to masculine stereotypes. These themes have been used in African literature to depict women negatively. The study seeks to explain how women characters in the selected novels have resisted patriarchy by circumventing the challenges emanating from a society that only favours men.

Nakamura (1999) underscores the importance of a woman's approach on harmonious and humane gender relations in his thesis entitled, "Asenath Bole Odaga's Vision of Gender Relations in *Endless Road*". He says, "the work reveals the atrocity of the male-centred society. As a result, the heroine is forced to battle with her partner for the realization of fair gender relations...." (Nakamura, 1999. p.27). In so far as the study is concerned we agree that it is true harmony is relevant to the achievement of gender relations, however, the point of departure is that for harmony to exist female characters must resist masculine stereotypes through peaceful(harmony) as well as violent or militant means and this is key to the resistance in the study. The concept is evident in the author's novels *Between the Years* and *Endless Road* as they draw parallels in

female characters' resistance to masculine stereotypes. Nakamura's vision of gender relations is only restricted to Asenath Odaga's *Endless Road*.

Nakamura (Ibid) continues to say that what the protagonist fights for in *Endless Road* is the equality in participation in social functions, particularly for her, the politics which is a preserve of men. The desire calls for radicalism in gender relations to be revolutionized. Consequently, the spouses become colleagues and not an addendum to one another. Put differently, a woman is primarily a human being before she is a wife or a mother in the new version of gender relations. Nakamura says... "the empowerment of the heroine goes beyond the personal security in the marriage and involves the renovation of the social norms of gender relations..." (Nakamura, 1999, p.29). The study agrees with Nakamura, however, what the study builds on is that the male gender first and foremost must be taught serious lessons for them to understand equality. This is the idea that the study advances when Salmarie beats Dino in a political contest. The result is so devastating that Dino cannot believe. The loss humbles Dino and he surrenders to a woman's power because Salmarie has substance.

In his study, Kivai (2010) emphasizes that betrayal has always existed in relationships between men and women and he tries to equate it to post-colonial Africa where leaders have continued to betray the citizens of their countries with empty promises of successful life that is never forthcoming. He says:

The male characters betray their spouses, girlfriends or fiancés at different times. This maps well with how the leaders betray the citizens. Security and basic utilities like water, electricity and fuel are lacking yet the leaders linger in power. The analysis of how male characters betray their women maps with how postcolonial leadership in Nigeria is a letdown to the people they purport to serve. (Kivai, 2010, p.77)

Further analysis of Kivai's female characters indicate that they resist betrayal by advocating for progressive voices to speak about male oppression and discrimination.

We argue that the study on the selected novels of Odaga highlights on the circumstances

under which female characters have dealt with betrayal perpetrated by their male counterparts who act as their spouses and also how they have resisted by devising their own survival mechanisms in a hostile environment.

In his review, Salami (2012) identifies patriarchy as one of the thematic concerns targeted by African feminists through which female characters resist masculine stereotyping. She argues that Africa is not an isolated case from the situation in other continents whereby women are otherized. African feminists focus on the psychological undertones of patriarchy that offer men a higher stature than women in the society. African feminism is of the view that if all of us strike out patriarchal hindrances, both men and women would co-exist amicably and foster peaceful relations. According to African feminists, women have to fight for their justifiable space in the society instead of waiting for men to offer such a right on a silver platter. In the study Asenath Odaga identifies the themes of politics, tradition and marriage as some of the issues that the female character has to wriggle herself from and achieve independence or find how to survive.

Salami (2012) further argues that African patriarchal conventions ordinarily demarcate masculine and feminine signifiers to the disadvantage of women. With this in mind however, African feminism does not pursue abandonment of traditions which collate cultural remembrance and storage of enormous legacy of awareness and spirituality. Instead, the aim of the traditions is adaptability to changing times so as to defeat stagnation and recreate culture anew.

The current study has benefitted from Salami's work since tradition and patriarchy are some of the thematic concerns that Asenath Odaga identifies in her novels as having been used to stereotype the female character and hence her resistance to such. We argue that the study however deviates from Salami's since the female characters who are the

main focus are presented as fighting for their gender space in a modern setting and not a traditional one. They have to surmount challenges that are as a result of civilization and modernity.

Ngele and Begisen (2017) observe that patriarchal foundations of the African culture destabilize women's ambitions to ascend to political power. There has however been a gleam of hope in Kenya with the promulgation of the 2010 constitution. It is now not news for Kenyan women to vie for political seats and challenge the traditional male dominance in the political arena. Though the two-thirds gender rule has been elusive in Kenya, the struggle for inclusion of women in the political class has been accelerated by civil society, political parties and pressure by the international community. The most eminent near fruition of the struggle was the 8th August 2017 General Elections, which registered an increase in women elected to parliament and county legislative arms of the 47 counties. For instance, three women candidates for the first time won gubernatorial seats in Kitui, Kirinyaga and Bomet counties while senate also got new women entries. Ngele's observation is relevant to Odaga's *Endless Road* whose main female character, Salmarie, emerges through cutthroat competition from the husband, Dino, to victory in a male dominated political setting.

Ngele and Begisen's work is relevant in the study since the work demonstrates that women not only rely on political prowess but they initiate tangible aspects of development that have propelled them to leadership roles at the expense of males who only rely on their masculinity and this mirrors Odaga's earlier years in the NGO world championing for women's rights.

Odhiambo (2006) contends in Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source* that stories of successful women must be highlighted in the national discourse of women emancipation particularly in Kenya and the general African setting. He observes thus:

The several female protagonists in the text, representing different historical periods in Kenya's history, symbolically articulate a kind of womanhood in contemporary Kenya that projects its own social agency and identity. In the process, these characters rewrite the persona that has been allocated to women in postcolonial Kenya's national story. Ogola's text seeks to project Kenyan women as capable of not only telling their own stories but also of claiming their rightful place and identity in the broader national life (Odhiambo, 2006, p235)

While Odhiambo contextualizes the position of the woman in the broader national picture of success the study depicts the woman as fighting masculine stereotypes through resistance often on mutual understanding with the male counterpart and if that is not the case then physical retaliation takes centre stage as in the characters of Seruya and Salmarie in *Between the Years* and *Endless Road* respectively.

2.4. Conclusion

The chapter has reviewed literature based on the three key objectives of the study and how female characters have been presented in African literature as resisting the masculine stereotypes. The first aspect of the objectives identified stereotypes such as female characters associated with illiteracy, prostitution and inability to lead. The second part of the review dwelled on the literary style relevant to female characters' resistance to masculine stereotypes. Styles such as symbolism and metaphor have been discussed. The third objective of the review has identified patriarchy as one of the themes that affects the relationship between men and women and it goes on to show how resistance prevails. In the next chapter we discuss the research methods under which the study is anchored upon.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0. Introduction

The chapter presents the research design, study area, study population, sampling procedure and sample size, data collection, methodology of data analysis and presentation and ethical considerations.

3.1. Research Design

The study employs an analytical research design. In-depth content analysis of Asenath Odaga's *Between the Years* and *Endless Road* is undertaken. Textual analysis is done on the primary sources of data based on the three key objectives of the study, that is, female characters' resistance to masculine stereotypes, literary style in female characters' resistance to masculine stereotypes and the thematic concerns in female characters' resistance to masculine stereotypes. All these is done to unearth the inequalities against female characters and how they change the narrative of oppression by the patriarchal system to suit their adaptability in the contemporary society. Close reading of the primary texts through the theory of gynocriticism enhances vital analysis in terms of understanding the key issues of the Asenath Odaga's female characters' resistance to masculine stereotypes. Secondary sources of data are used to back up the various critical standpoints that emanate.

3.2. Study Area

The study area is restricted to all the published novels and adult works by Asenath Bole Odaga. These include *The Shade Changes* (1984), *Between the Years* (1987), *A Bridge in Time* (1987), *Riana* (1991), *Endless Road* (1995) and *Something for Nothing* (2001).

3.3. Research Techniques

The study considered bibliographical and electronic resources needed for literary research, including reference works, specific glossaries, consultation of catalogues from research libraries, use of databases of literary texts corresponding to different periods and novels. Critical works relevant to the area of gender representation, feminism and masculinity were also considered.

3.4. Target Population

The target population for the study consists of two novels by the author Asenath Odaga, that is, *Between the Years* (1987) and *Endless Road* (1995) that were purposively sampled from the six novels that the author has written.

3.5. Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The sampling procedure that is adopted is purposive sampling technique. Kisilu and Tromp (2011) state that the researcher targets a group of subjects believed to be reliable for the study. The study directly targeted specific texts of the author dealing with the representation of female characters that are fighting for spaces and freedom in a male dominated world. The sample size arrived at are two out of the six novels that the author has written. Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) observe that 10% to 30% is representative enough of the sample size. 30% of six novels yields 1.8 which is rounded off to two novels. Having read the works of the author we established that the two selected novels

deal with female characters resisting male dominance. These two novels rendered themselves to a gynocritic analysis.

3.6. Data Collection

The primary data for the study was collected through an observation checklist by reading and rereading of the two novels, that is *Between the Years* (1987) and *Endless Road* (1995). The secondary data was collected through reading and analysis of critical works and articles from the library and on the internet in order to obtain works on resistance to male dominance. The researcher visited the institutional libraries and read journals, articles, theses, newspapers and magazines for review of literature and reading of theoretical framework. The novels under study were read and re-read several times in order to identify and collect data on female characters' resistance to masculine stereotypes.

The data was collected by way of encoding and decoding. Symbols and letters were assigned to various issues in the texts. Stereotypes were identified by letter 'S', themes by letter 'T', characters by letter 'C' and literary aesthetics using 'L. A'. Thereafter the researcher converted the various codes into thoughts and ideas by coding the messages presented in the two texts.

3.7. Data Analysis and Presentation

The data that was collected for the study was analyzed through close reading and textual analysis. Through the first mode of gynocriticism the researcher identified the images and stereotypes evident in *Between the Years* and *Endless Road*. Female characters' resistance to stereotypes such as illiteracy, inability to lead and prostitution are clearly demarcated.

Through the second mode of gynocriticism literary styles such as metaphor, flashback, song and narrative techniques, the research has analyzed how female characters have resisted masculine stereotypes. Our study also by virtue of gynocriticism identifies various themes such as politics, heartaches of love, radicalism, education and family reunion having been shown as the platform over which female characters are resisting masculine stereotypes.

The researcher analyzed the key texts using textual analysis by focusing on the underlying ideological and cultural assumptions of the texts under study. Content was understood as a 'text' and not as a fixed entity but as a complex set of discursive strategies whereby meaning is decentralized from the author.

Belsey (2014) observes that textual analysis is a research method that entails close experience with the text without any assumptions. She further observes that textual analysis constitutes what is acceptable as an explanation and that scholarship involves hunting down chronicles, symbols, life stories, recorded dialogues and general rumours. She continues to say that meaning is found from an informed knowledge of language and this implies that meaning is therefore found from signifiers, sounds and images. In our reading of Odaga's novels, we find that there are some universal aspects of male dominance such as infidelity, unilateralism in decision making and dictatorship such as the one seen in Dino's character who simply assumes that a woman, being the weaker sex, should not even think of competing the man in a political contest. We know that political contests are won by clear articulation of policies and issues. Salmarie has this trait while Dino lacks it.

In analyzing the key texts under study we are guided by key issues that emanate from the text which is our source of information that is therefore grounded through textual analysis. Belsey considers this:

while research entails unearthing information, it is the textual analysis that poses the questions which research sets out to answer. The reverse process tends to distort the text...in principle, my idea is that the text has priority; ideally the text sets the agenda (Belsey, 2014, p.171)

The texts under study pose the pertinent question that sets the agenda for the study, which is whether there is resistance to masculine stereotypes? The answer is yes. This therefore forms the guiding principle in the study. *Between the Years* and *Endless Road* are interpreted in multiple ways by theory i.e. objectification, otherization and capitalism. Other ideological viewpoints from scholars are also considered. The researcher therefore as the reader subjects female characters' resistance to masculine stereotypes into various interpretations. Roland Barthes affirms the death of the author by giving the reader the powers to create meaning. He says:

a text consists of multiple writings, issuing from several cultures and entering into dialogue with each other, into parody, into contestation; but there is one place where this multiplicity is collected, united, and this place is not the author, as we have hitherto said it was, but the reader: the reader is the very space in which are inscribed, without any being lost, all the citations a writing consists of; the unity of a text is not in its origin, it is in its destination; but this destination can no longer be personal: the reader is a man without history, without biography, without psychology; he is only that someone who holds gathered into a single field all the paths of which the text is constituted (Barthes, 1968, p .6)

The data collected was presented using continuous prose. The data was also analyzed by rereading the novels, consulting critical works and assigning codes to characters, themes and styles. Ultimately textual analysis in the analysis of the data collected from the works of Asenath Odaga aims to link them to their historical, cultural, political, and the artistic surrounding. The analysis also embarked on close reading whereby the texts are detached from their immediate situation to give out independent conclusions. Scholars

have given their opinions on what exactly is close reading when applied to various texts.

Elaine Showalter explains it as:

slow reading, a deliberate attempt to detach ourselves from the magical power of story-telling and pay attention to language, imagery, allusion, intertextuality, syntax and form...a form of defamiliarization we use in order to break through our habitual and casual reading practices (Showalter, 2002, p.98).

In the texts we take a pause to look at female characters' resistance to the masculine stereotypes while connecting to the multiple meanings generated by the texts. We also consider the various descriptions and the general effects of particular words as they are applied by Asenath Odaga.

3.8. Ethical Considerations

Sources of primary and secondary data were acknowledged by citing the authorities. Permission was also sought for data that was available online and other public forums and this was done by registering first of all in the main platforms through the email address for instance a platform such as semantic scholar needed registration of personal email address. The only literary critical study done on Asenath Odaga, "Asenath Bole Odaga's Vision of Gender Relations in *"Endless Road"*", by Katsuji Nakamura in the year 1999 was not available online and the researcher got permission from the University of Nairobi Main Library to access it. The researcher obtained approval from Rongo University and research permit from NACOSTI.

3.9. Conclusion

The chapter has discussed the research design, study area, research techniques, study population, sampling procedure and sample size, data collection, data analysis and presentation, ethical considerations in female characters' resistance to masculine stereotypes in Odaga's selected novels and the conclusion. In the next chapter we analyse and interpret the data.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.0. Introduction

The chapter analyses the data, the results and the interpretation alongside the three objectives of the study that is the masculine stereotypes, literary style and the thematic concerns emanating. It is anchored on textual analysis and gynocriticism.

4.1. Masculine Projection of the Female Person

The objective examines the position of the woman from the masculine and more often male chauvinistic stance. In essence, men seem to construct and shape women characters as lesser beings in the selected novels in an attempt to demean and despise the female person.

4.1.1. The Female Body as an Avenue for Male Gratification

One of the most conspicuous concerns of Asenath Odaga in *Between the Years* and *Endless Road* is the manner in which male characters relate with the female body. Salmarie's virginity in *Endless Road* is a source of strength for her. She says, "I argued and tried to convince him that I had never made love with any man..." (Odaga, 1995, p. 66). Salmarie is upbeat because of being a virgin. Virginity in this case is fundamental, not to the woman but to a man. Salmarie is happy that her husband is elated by the news and this implies that virginity is more useful to the man and women are only custodians of what men desire. Salmarie makes it known to us that Dino, her husband had sexual challenges but once he overcame them, "my virginity became my passport to his heart" (Odaga, 1995, p. 70).

Cooper and Nylander (2010) argue that any female person without the experience of vaginal-penile heterosexual penetrative sex is a virgin. This is the case with Salmarie because she is at this point yet to engage any man in sexual vaginal intercourse.

Salmarie has thus preserved herself and upheld sexual sanctity for her future husband. Her case is well articulated by Molla *et al.*, (2008) who posit that virginity is maintained by both girls and boys for marital purposes. Salmarie has therefore kept herself pure because she wants to experience sex only after she has gotten married to Dino. She resonates with purity of marriage seen to be directed by high regard for the marriage institution. Kyalo (2012) opines that the traditional marriage system of entering into marital bliss when one has not engaged in sex gives the proper flavour for a stable marriage. This is thus Salmarie's notion because she wants to establish a healthy marriage with her husband. She takes her virginity seriously. Harrison (2008) argues for the place of virginity in the African societies by placing high social value on it, because virginity has a historical and material basis and derives from culturally embedded notions of respect. Salmarie resists early sexual escapades with Dino initially as she doesn't entertain the thoughts and really fate is on her side as Dino proceeds to the North Eastern part of Kenya for his postgraduate research and he becomes incommunicado for a long period of time. It is worth noting that they first engage in intimacy while in Sweden as a couple and Dino is indeed elated that he is the first man in her sexual life.

On another occasion, the marital woes between Salmarie and Dino escalate and they no longer feel the urge for sexual intimacy. But Dino, in his quest for sexual gratification is reported to at some point throwing lusty looks at Salmarie. Sex in this case is interpreted as a tool of oppression as explained by Salmarie who is candid in saying she

“wasn’t going to fall into that trap” (Odaga, 1995, p. 84) and that she could do without sex. The woman’s body here is objectified and seen only as an object of pleasure for the man. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) postulate that women are sexually objectified and treated as an object to be valued for its use by others.

The ‘others’ in this case are men like Dino whose lustful looks at his wife are sexually suggestive and he wants her in bed to satisfy himself. He negates the individual self of his wife and at this specific time only sees her as a sex object. Bartky (1990) argues that sexual objectification occurs when a woman’s body or body parts are singled out and separated from her as a person and she is primarily viewed as a physical object of male sexual desire. This is precisely how Dino views his wife’s body by cunningly luring her to bed.

The near- rape incident that would have been meted on Salmarie at the height of political elections presents yet another case of objectification of the female body. The rape alludes to the vagina as a man’s avenue for sexual gratification. Rape therefore is more male- centered as it entails pleasure for the man and pain for the woman. The vagina is thus used by men to access the inner part of the woman in order to subdue and conquer her. One of the abductors sent to kidnap Salmarie wishes not only to carry out the duty but also to rape her. Salmarie reports that “one of them had an ulterior motive, his own agenda! He was planning to rape me!” (Odaga, 1995, p. 108). Salmarie resists the planned rape by one of the goons by remaining studiously silent in her house without moving so that no attention is raised on her presence. Circumstances also favoured her because she had by sheer luck arrived earlier than usual, through a wicket at the back of her house. This trick threw her assailants off the track and they could not trace her. Out of this frustration they left the balcony of her house. Salmarie quickly

wrote a fax message to her brother informing him of a car and three people who had been at her house. The brother came to fetch her and they painfully learned that the gate watchman had naively and unknowingly collaborated with her would- be kidnappers.

The woman's body is further manifested as an avenue for male pleasure when, after a bruising political battle, Salmarie is advised by a female friend to welcome her husband to bed and celebrate her political victory. This is a warped way of thinking that has been engendered in the patriarchal society and has consequently been adopted even by females. In this way, sex is seen as a tension reducing tool and a mode of fostering marital reunion after tumultuous bitter marriage between Salmarie and her husband. The friend wants Salmarie to submit sexually to her husband. According to MacKinnon (1989), "men have been conditioned to find women's subordination sexy, and women have been conditioned to find a particular male version of female sexuality as erotic – one in which they are defined from a male point of view" (MacKinnon, 1989, p. 140). Sexual intercourse would thus be an avenue for the man to access his wife's innermost part to attain the long desired gratification that had been denied for so long a time. This is a warped patriarchal ideology that Salmarie almost succumbs to and she reminds her female friend that she is now a one man's woman although she has now acquired a new lover—politics. She resists the trap by only reconciling with the husband as they retire to their matrimonial bed without any intimacy. Xu (2007) opines that gynocriticism came about as an opposition to Freudian Psychoanalysis view of male phallus supremacy. He says, "phallic prejudice itself creates a female consciousness that demands a critique, and that prejudice against the female incites the noesis that gets attributed to the female." (Xu, 2007, p.3). It is on the background of such gynocritical stand that Odaga instigates Salmarie to resist intimacy at this level. In fact, the celebration belongs to her and therefore it would be preposterous for her to enjoy

lovmaking with Dino when she has won over him in the political contest and this is where resistance comes in.

In *Between the Years* (1987), Ralo brings Apon, the protagonist of the novel, a girl. This is part of the grand scheme by the society to have Apon start to seriously consider getting married. The society is worried that a man who has attained Western education can end up being useless if he does not get a woman by his side. While Apon's interest is somewhere else: studying the society afresh, Ralo tells him to first relax and enjoy life. For Ralo, Apon worries too much for the society which he may not have much control over. Ralo says to Apon, "for the moment, you only need to relax and enjoy yourself. In order to make this possible, I have brought a special guest, a girl to entertain you. She's waiting for you in your *simba*" (Odaga, 1987, p. 15).

Ralo thus has the typical idea that a woman should gratify a man sexually and it is appalling that the girl is not consulted to ascertain whether she is in agreement of the planned sex or not. The woman here is a sex object who must succumb to the whims of a man and lay there to satisfy him. The girl is expected to offer sexual services to quell the thirst of a man regardless of whether she herself is in need of sex. Ralo's labelling of the girl as "a special guest" alludes to a sexist remark because she is only special in so far as sex matters are concerned. Ralo has only presented the girl, at least for this first time, for a conjugal visit to Apon. Ralo's determination is also sexist considering the effort it takes him to present a girl for sexual intercourse. Ralo has completely objectified the girl.

This is supported by Nussbaum who defines objectification as "... the seeing and/or treating of someone as an object ... treating one thing as another: One is treating *as an object*, what really is not an object, what is, in fact, a human being" (Nussbaum, 1997,

p. 251). MacKinnon (1987) and Dworkin (2000) are concerned that patriarchal societies treat women as mere instruments for the purposes of men. MacKinnon (ibid) says that women “exist to the *end* of male pleasure” MacKinnon, 1987, p. 173).

This *end* is what Ralo wants to achieve by presenting a girl to Apon for sexual gratification. Dworkin similarly observes that:

The whole world outside man himself is viewed as the object world ... Man uses objects – women, children, animals, sensate beings called objects as a matter of course – to fell his own power and presence...A man must function as the human centre of a chattel-oriented sensibility, surrounded by objects to be used so he can experience his own power and pleasure (Dworkin, 1989, p. 104).

Ralo then can be seen as exercising his masculine power over the girl by organizing a sexual spree in order to subdue her. To begin with, there is the question of distance. The girl is not from Apon’s immediate neighborhood and this portrays Ralo as a man who tasked his shoulders to ensure the girl is delivered to Apon’s *Simba*. Ralo stresses that, “I’ve fetched the girl from her home all the way across the river” (Odaga, 1987, p. 15) which in essence is his confirmation that the task took him a great effort. The other aspect of Ralo’s determination is the timing of his delivery. He brings the girl early in the morning ostensibly because of the fear of being seen with the youngest daughter of Mwalimu Musa on the village paths. The second reason is because it would be easier to sneak the girl into Apon’s *Simba* without Apon’s extended family having to witness. The handling of this scenario is a masculine stereotype because of the way the girl is treated as a sexual object for male gratification. At this instance she passes as a passive character who is being remote- controlled by men. Chauvinism is more espoused by Ralo, nobody in the first place has requested him to deliver a girl for sexual services.

Indeed, Apon asks, “...what shall I do with her? You should have sought my opinion before you brought her along” (Odaga, 1987, p. 16) and then adds almost resignedly,

“her coming is inopportune now since there are so many people who call in all day long to meet and talk to me” (Odaga, 1987, p. 16). This response irks Ralo who thinks that Apon is being irrational and even goes ahead to accuse Westernization for Apon’s behaviour. Ralo hits back at the unenthusiastic reception he gets and speaks curtly to Apon, “I see some harm has been done to your outlook on our social ways. You have become a Whiteman” (Odaga, 1987, p. 17). Apon admits that he has lost touch with local women but Ralo retorts, “Do you mean to tell me you won’t know what to do with a woman? Did the white man castrate you?” (Odaga, 1987, p. 17). With such utterances and from the patriarchal background that encourages premarital sex in his society, it is clear that Ralo is keen to have Apon sleep with Seruya, the girl he brought but Apon is hesitant. This pits the two men into two opposing camps which sets out Ralo as an outright pervert who only thinks women are only meant for sex even without their consent. Interestingly, Apon in this instance, though being himself a man, in some way opposes such a stereotype and tactically departs from the idea of having sex with Seruya.

On a flip side, Apon later on presents the same masculine projections to the women when he seems to enjoy the fact that he broke Seruya’s virginity. He is delighted by this achievement which means it matters most to the man. Apon cements the patriarchal myth that Seruya is his personal property. It is then therefore, a deduction of logic that a man conquers the woman’s body through sex. Apon has thus used his conquering of Seruya sexually as a way of silencing her and using that to control her. Almost enthusiastically, he tells Seruya that, “You couldn’t deny I was the first man ever to go to bed with you last night” (Odaga, 1987, p. 144). Apon therefore uses the “last night’s encounter to possess Seruya and just like an object, tells her, “You are mine” (Odaga, 1987, p. 144). This braggadocious tendency by Apon reduces Seruya’s self-worth and

“she began to weep. The man had trapped her and she had played easily into his hands. She felt confused and humiliated ... she felt depressed and hungry. She wept on (Odaga, 1987, p. 144).

Seruya’s frustration can be explained by Kyalo (2012) who argues that sex before marriage is abhorred by the woman because it steals her virginity and destroys the future marriage. This is the realization that strikes Seruya after her premarital sex with Apon. She feels defrauded of her pride and this explains why she cries with a lot of bitterness. Apon on the other end portrays a sense of inflated hubris ostensibly because he is man and thinks he can wield power over the woman using sex. Apon is not concerned with remaining a virgin before marriage because male virginity matters less. Carpenter (2005) notes that women’s virginity holds a greater social value than men’s because it is perceived and portrayed as a gift given to the bridegroom on the wedding day. In this case, for Seruya, since she has already engaged in premarital sex, she can no longer gift her future husband her virginity because she will not be having one at the time of being officially married.

After her sexual escapade with Apon, Seruya wonders how her parents will view her. She is much aware how frustrated they will be to learn that she has already slept with a man who is not yet her husband. She is both a religious and cultural person and thus has high regard for virginity. Olson and Garcia-Moreno (2017) note that virginity is valued by almost all religious sectors and cultures of the world.

Seruya’s religion and culture is no exception and she feels disappointed at herself and has to live with the guilt of failing her parents by not remaining morally upright. Naula, Owor and Gulere (2018) argue that a virgin bride is an honour to her parents and a prize

to her husband. Seruya has lost both of these virtues and has now to live with a low self-esteem.

This section has analyzed the female body as an avenue for male gratification detailing how patriarchy has relegated the female body as an object for sexual pleasure. The selected novels have demonstrated the author's view against this misrepresentation through the characters of Salmarie and Seruya. Gynocriticism as a theory is of the opinion that objectification plays a central role in reducing women to what is referred as the sex class and this is the aim of our study that shows resistance to such kind of stereotypical representation. Asenath Odaga's view on objectification is derived from the main protagonists in the text, through Apon, who although is a male, Odaga resists all kinds of objectification for instance when Ralo insists that he must have intimacy with Seruya in *Between the Years* and Salmarie also in *Endless Road* resists another woman's advice that she must be intimate with Dino in order to celebrate her political victory. Corrigan (2013) in a review of *The Madwoman in the Attic* by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar notes that their celebration of resistance of women writers and their heroines forms our depictions on objectification or sexual degradation of women and this is the idea behind gynocriticism, resistance to sexual oppression.

4.1.2. Patriarchy and 'otherization': The woman as the other

Andrade (1998) asserts that the basic concern of women's literature was "critiques of local patriarchies" and the creation of "domestic tale of women's emancipation from local patriarchy" (Andrade, 1998, p. 203). Otherness of gender has been portrayed in the two novels. The male characters are largely at the centre while the women are pushed to the periphery. It is the men who construct the identity of the women reducing

them to lesser human beings. The men view themselves as the real human beings resulting into the binary construct of the self and the other.

The role ascribed to women in the two texts is that of inferior duties such as cooking while the men are thought intelligent to handle serious societal issues such as political leadership. Staszak talks of otherization as:

Otherness is the result of a discursive process by which a dominant in-group (“Us,” the self) constructs one or many dominated out-groups (“Them,” Other) by stigmatizing a difference—a discrimination. To state it naively, difference belongs to the realm of fact and otherness belongs to the realm of discourse. Thus, biological sex is difference, whereas gender is otherness (Staszak, 2008, p. 2).

Of interest thus is ‘otherness’ of gender in the selected novels to decipher how masculinities portray the feminine gender and the counteractive discourse postulated by women to dismantle how they have been constructed.

McDowell (1992) argues that “the opposition of ‘self’ to ‘other’, and all those analogous to it, relate hierarchically and reproduce the more fundamental opposition between male and female” (McDowell, p. 59). On her part Beauvoir puts forth her well known thesis that man is the “Subject, he is the Absolute” while the woman is “the Other” (Beauvoir, 1993, p. 15). However, Beauvoir is quick to qualify this statement not as hers but as a man’s perspective of the woman to ensure that the woman subordinates to him and accepts herself as inferior. Beauvoir sums up that “man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him” (Beauvoir, 1993, p.15). This then becomes a man’s deliberate attempt to otherize the woman and push her into the peripheries. Gough (1975) opines that “even in hunting and gathering societies, it seems that women are always in some sense the ‘second sex’ with greater or lesser subordination to men” (Gough, 1975, p. 187). The supposition of being a ‘second sex’ is what Odaga’s female

characters struggle to deconstruct in their quest to defeat the stereotypical views of the woman by man.

Patriarchy as a form of otherization sets in from the onset in Odaga's *Endless Road* when Salmarie, the major female character in the novel encounters Dino. Their meeting has permeations of patriarchal inclinations whereby Dino seems to be overly assertive and dominant to Salmarie even when it is their first formal meeting. Salmarie narrates this first encounter thus:

As I emerged from the gate, I saw a dark blue saloon car approaching our home. And I chuckled to myself, wondering which one of my brothers or sisters had bought such a beautiful car. As I hurried along the narrow path running parallel to the rough country motorway, the car which was speeding towards our home, came to a stop so close to me, that it almost threw me off balance. I yelled and jumped into the grass along the road. And as you can imagine, I was furious with whoever the driver was (Odaga, 1995, p. 5).

The driver of the car was Dino. His manner of handling the automobile illustrates his egoistic masculinity and an inflated hubris. His behaviour can be understood as emanating from patriarchal leaning because he deliberately drives carelessly to scare a seemingly feeble woman, Salmarie. His virility is a show of his might and dominance over the feminine gender which he can treat any way he feels. Dino tries to cover up his recklessness by telling Salmarie that all that fiasco was a joke and Salmarie dismisses such an insinuation as joking "so dangerously with life!" (Odaga, 1995, p. 7). Salmarie is opposed to this form of self-entitlement by Dino who thinks that all the other road users are not aware of their rights as pedestrians and motorists. In this case Dino's behavior otherizes Salmarie as weaker female being who is just reduced to a bystander. Salmarie resists this otherization by invoking traffic law that is against crazy motorists who exhibit madness and that they should not be allowed on the road.

In another example and in a wishful thinking, and due to Salmarie's astuteness, her parents wish she were a boy just like Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe wishes that Ezinma was a boy since he is so much endeared to masculine qualities. Such thoughts intimate to the position of the male child in comparison to the female one. Salmarie's society is thus more appreciative of the male gender and Salmarie's worth is reduced as she was "bound to get married and move away with her husband" (Odaga, 1995, p. 13). As such, girls are seen as having no role to play in taking care of their parents at their old age. This is otherization at play as the female person is pushed to peripheral roles of playing a wife while the boy child remains at the centre of the mainstream discourse and is tasked with roles that are deemed difficult and masculine. In order to counter this otherization Salmarie began to view herself with a lot of seriousness as someone in a vulnerable position since she had so many people much older than her whom she would have to look after in their old age. This made her responsible and caring. Almost every end of the month, she went home to visit her parents and to find out how they were doing. She also made sure she got in touch with her brothers and sisters and knew how each of them was doing.

In addition, Salmarie's society is also swift to draw conclusion of her possible pregnancy simply because her marital customs are rushed with great speed. The woman's body is thus constructed through patriarchal lenses and judged harshly if pregnant before marriage while the male body responsible for such pregnancy does not feature with such a sexist discourse. Salmarie reports that, "people as usual gloated at me, seeking to ascertain whether or not I was pregnant; most girls get married hurriedly when they are pregnant" (Odaga, 1995, p. 23). The pressure is so much on Salmarie to be pregnant yet the society is so silent on Dino who is supposed to be responsible for such insinuations. Strangely we learn later that Dino has an affliction that interferes

with his fertility. This is otherization at play. Salmarie's mother opposes this act of otherization by answering back a relative who seems to poke her nose into Salmarie's affairs. She calmly tells the relative to ask Salmarie herself since she was present and available to answer such questions. By doing so the query suffers a natural death through assertiveness.

Moreover, in Salmarie's society, a woman to be married is seen as an object to be possessed by the husband. After the customary marital rituals, she makes it known that she was to be a "bride sent through the post, a parcel bride" (Odaga, 1995, p. 42) just like her mother before her. This by implication means that women are objectified and their worth downgraded to the standard of a parcel, an inanimate thing that relies on the sender and the recipient. Salmarie's voice is muted here in terms of her decisions and just like her mother she is made into a commodity. However, this sort of otherization is countered when Salmarie says that unlike her mother before she had the advantage of having known Dino for a longer period than her mother had known her father. Her mother further buttresses her ideology of being a stronger woman by advising her that as an adult and a grown person, she should just learn to look at life objectively and take decisions some of which might be difficult to execute or stick to, in other words she had to be determined. From the elaborate conversation with her mother she got the courage, renewed strength and determination to go to Europe to marry Dino.

Furthermore, in a flashback narrative style, Odaga is adequate in supplying us with the information of the dismay and shock visited upon by Salmarie's mother when she went to join her husband in Tanzania as a young "postal bride" (Odaga, 1995, p. 42). The husband at that time kept another woman. Salmarie's mother had a "rude shock one morning when she learnt that her new husband had another woman: A Tanzanian

woman with whom he had two children...” (Odaga, 1995, p. 45). On her daughter’s further probe, Mrs. Moro sums up that “men have been known to use and dump women whenever it was their convenience” (Odaga, 1995, p. 47). This “polygamous” nature of her husband draws to the perception of men about women. Ryan and Jetha (2010) believe that a man is at liberty to have as many women as he wishes because in any case, they are equal to his any other material possession. Damaris resists this kind of arrangement because she has not been consulted. She objected by saying that she couldn’t stay as a second wife. She was not a scum to his guiles to have a harem. She was a Christian and so she requested for a ticket back home and she was ready to board a steamship leaving for Kenya. Apon in *Between the Years* engages in a relationship with Jane Mbura at the expense of his marriage to Seruya. Seruya resists this strange happening by retaliating in equal measure and she does this by rekindling her former love life with Tim who was her boyfriend while in college.

Equally important, in matter’s bride price, the woman is not directly entitled to whatever material possession is given to her family by her husband to be. Such possessions are treasures of her parents and other relatives. As is the case in Odaga’s *Endless Road*, Kadro, Salmarie’s brother is a beneficiary of his sister’s bride price and can be seen driving around a “new Mercedes Benz Dino had given them as part of my bride wealth” (Odaga, 1995, p. 53). This appears to be an atrocity to Salmarie since she is otherized and her input is ignored and her father takes cognisance of this by countering her frustration. He praises her by invoking the spirits of her grandmother Ajienda who was said to be brave and an upright woman with a big heart for loving and that she never accepted defeat. Ajienda was said to be hardworking and as a result accumulated a lot of wealth in the form of cattle, sheep, goats and granaries and other crops.

In another angle, soon after Salmarie joins her husband in Europe, trouble begins the very same night. Dino is suspicious of his new wife and argues that “all women I have known have proved untrustworthy. Why should I think you are any better”? (Odaga,1995, p.60) Dino’s statement is stereotypical because he has associated mistrust with all women and seems to borrow from the metanarrative of the garden of Eden where Eve, the symbol for all women is portrayed as callous and treacherous. Dino in a quick turn of events wants to cancel the marriage more to the chagrin of Salmarie who is left in utter disbelief. The attitude of Dino in this instance is that of masculinity where a man thinks he is the sole decision maker and a woman should take whatever decision made by a man without question. In his society therefore, women are only enactors of decisions and not team players in decision making circles.

Dino’s psychological construction of women can be perceived to emanate from his two previous intimate relationships with his two wives; the first wife, was a drug addict, and ran away on his wedding night. He reported her disappearance to the police and searched for her everywhere. After a fortnight, her decomposed body was found in one of her friend’s flat with a suicide note. His other wife, July, the Kenyan woman, was young and naïve. She married him, but kept on having affairs with her white boyfriends. He discovered this and asked for a divorce. These circumstances left his ego broken and “consequently he had developed a negative attitude towards life in general, but specifically towards women...” (Odaga, 1995, p. 65).

As a result of the above fore goings, infertility in Salmarie’s society is construed to be solely a female problem irrespective of Dino’s failure to rise to the occasion and therefore only a woman is blamed in case there are issues of barrenness in a family. Salmarie is however enthralled that fate is on her side as she bears Dino enough

children and says that, “my people always blame childlessness on a wife. Most negative occurrences are blamed on a woman ever since the time of Adam and Eve!” (Odaga, 1995, p. 79). Naturally and through concerted efforts Salmarie circumvents this stereotype by being able to bring forth children into the family through traditional interventions.

Above all material possession is quite another matter that has been used by men in Salmarie’s society to push women to the margins. Salmarie herself owns a house that to an extent threatens the position of Dino, her husband. At the height of the bruising political battle, and in order to subdue Salmarie, Dino threatens to kick her out of the house. Although the house in question is legally Salmarie’s, Dino, simply because of being a man feels he has exclusive right over the house even when he did not purchase it. He intimidates Salmarie and warns her not to be autonomous simply because she owns a house. Salmarie, feeling completely intimidated tells us that “Dino was a man and as such he could twist matters and have me thrown out of this house. Most lawyers and those who made decisions on such issues were men ...” (Odaga, 1995, p. 95). In order to counter this masculine threat Salmarie invokes her constitutional rights of protection. She is going to get a lawyer to write to him to get a court injunction to deter and bar him from coming anywhere near her. She spells out her own conditions that she is to demand half of all that he possesses and she would be ruthless. It would be a total break and a total divorce: an irreversible decision. However, this does not come to reality since Dino does not proceed with his threat since he is humiliated at the polls and therefore he develops cold feet. Simone de Beavour (1949) sets the record straight by observing that a woman must resist being treated as the “other”. She notes that a woman must resist all the so called privileges from the male gender at all costs. Beavour

continues to say that women cannot grow through privileges from men and that they must chart their own way. She notes:

To decline to be the Other, to refuse to be a party to the deal – this would be for women to renounce all the advantages conferred upon them by their alliance with the superior caste. Man-the-sovereign will provide woman-the-liege with material protection and will undertake the moral justification of her existence; thus she can evade at once both economic risk and the metaphysical risk of a liberty in which ends and aims must be contrived without assistance (Beavour,1949, p.4)

Asenath Odaga presents Salmarie as charting the way-forward by resorting to the law in order to protect her material possession. Her only protection is enshrined in the constitution of the country and this provides resistance to masculine oppression, that a woman must rely on the man to own property. Gynocriticism draws a lot from Virginia Woolf's question in *A Room of One's Own* and second wave of feminism. She asks:

“What had our mothers been doing that they had no wealth to leave us? Powdering their noses? Looking in at shop windows? Flaunting in the sun at Monte Carlo” (Woolf,1988, p.10).

The pertinent question that Asenath Odaga answer from the above quote is that her heroines must be proactive and be agents of change. They should own their possessions legally as they are living in a democratic society that observes human rights and this is what Salmarie does. This is resistance to masculine stereotype that women cannot own wealth. Pourgharib observes that... “Virginia Woolf argued that women's experience could be the basis for transformative social change...” (Pourghaba,2008, p.54).

In the same manner Seruya in *Between the Years* (1987) is caught at crossroads when she cannot make an independent decision about her future academic path. Her father, Mwalimu Musa wants her to study medicine overseas whereas her passion is in the teaching profession. She is thus trapped in her father's controlling masculinity. In her confession, she tells Apon that:

I'd like to study science subjects, but I must admit that at times I'm confused and unsure whether I should go abroad or not... You see, it's all my father's idea. He wants me to become a doctor. Maybe I'll have to go to please him. (Odaga, 1987, p. 20)

While her passion is to become a teacher, Seruya thinks she has no choice but to please her father. Such a feminine resignation to a man's whims is a confirmation that the woman here is otherized and her decision making voice muted. Eckstein posits that:

“in dichotomous configurations like speech/silence and centre/margins, speech is constructed as a male dominion while silence is assigned to the female, the central and livable space is reserved for man whereas woman is driven to the suffocating spacelessness of the margins” (Eckstein, 1997, p. 32).

Seruya's voicelessness in matters concerning her career therefore “suffocates” her speech and she cannot talk her mind out in order to reason with her father who is an embodiment of male dominion. The dominant view by her father has to be executed at the expense of her wish. The woman has to do what a man wants and in so doing, forgo her own happiness, live in misery only for the joy of a man. But Apon, who appears to be the voice of reason is quick to diffuse masculine stereotypes. He tells Seruya that:

If teaching is your choice, then you should go ahead and train as a teacher. You should not allow your father to force you into going against your wishes... This I have always felt is one of the mistakes parents make when they refuse to allow their children a free choice. (Odaga, 1987, p. 20)

Apon is indeed an intermediary to quell masculine extremism. He comes at the aid of women like Seruya to show them that they are just as equal to men and that they too can make their independent decisions and choose their own destiny. Apon therefore revamps the feminine quest for self-happiness and heightens the position of women in the society. At the end, Seruya defeats her father's masculinity by finding her way into the teaching profession. This is a way of subverting her father's pattern of thoughts and thus rebelling against the stereotype that she cannot make up her mind independently ostensibly because she is a woman. By subverting, the status quo, Seruya finally gets

her much desired happiness in the teaching profession. In this way, “the subaltern categories break the silences imposed on them and retrieve their voice by formulating subversive signification system of their own, converting silence itself into a signifier” (Eckstein, 1996, p. 32).

On the same ground of decision making, Seruya is caught unawares by the customs which technically make her married to Apon. Seruya, it appears is tricked into marrying Apon through the cunning acts of her aunt, Angelina who deliberately leaves her at Apon’s house promising to return to fetch her. Odaga informs us that:

Aunt Angelina didn’t show up in the morning, but it was Seruya’s turn to make a fuss. She demanded to be taken to her aunt’s house. She wouldn’t eat her breakfast. Apon grew weary of her insistence, watching her mischievously as he hungrily ate his breakfast, then he calmly dropped the pending bombshell. (Odaga, 1987, p. 143)

To her surprise, Apon tells her, “Let me put your mind at ease. You won’t be returning to your aunt’s house anymore, because according to our customs you became my wife last night” (Odaga, 1987, p. 143). This makes Seruya feel trapped and she protests to Apon thus, “You are joking. Nobody observes those archaic customs anymore. How many women have spent a night in this house and the following day walked away to their own places?” (Odaga, 1987, p. 143). This protestation shows Seruya’s disdain for what she ostensibly terms as backward and retrogressive culture that only favours a man who makes a decision on behalf of a woman. She is not ready therefore to partake in a matrimony whose decision was made without her voice being heard. Although she succumbs to the marriage, we realize that her aunt, Angelina, wins the battle for her to be married due to the dictates of patriarchy in her society. Seruya in this instance goes against her aunt and Apon who connive to have her married without her consent by protesting.

The examples given above on otherization and the resistance from the main female characters, Salmarie and Seruya, only serve to achieve the main goal of gynocriticism which is to move women from the state of subordination to independence, from criticizing the other to criticizing the self and furthermore, contributing to the establishment and development of the female aesthetics; therefore, moving from the margin to the centre. Elaine Showalter refers to these sort of resistance to masculine stereotypes as unique experience that are common to women and not linear representation of male aspects from tradition. She observes:

The program of gynocritics is to construct a female framework for the analysis of women's literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience, rather than to adapt male models and theories. Gynocritics begins at the point when we free ourselves from the linear absolutes of male literary history, stop trying to fit women between the lines of male tradition, and focus instead on the new visible world of female culture (Showalter, 1985, p. 131).

Asenath Odaga's representation of the female characters resisting the various forms of objectification in our case provides the platform for the female characters to free themselves from the linear absolutes of male literary of historical oppression in the society as it is seen in other literary works. When this is achieved in female writings then Showalter refers to it as the new free world.

4.1.3. Conclusion

This section has examined the aspects of how the men view the woman's body as well as patriarchal otherization of the woman's self. The men push the female characters to the margins of the society in order to demean and reduce their worth. All this is in a bid for the male characters to assert themselves as dominant and powerful figures who wield power over the woman. While the woman is expected to submit to the male dominance, this section has attempted to critic how the female characters subvert hegemonic masculinities and gender stereotypes.

4.2. Literary Aesthetics: Style and Femininity

4.2.1. Introduction

This section examines the nexus between content delivery and style in Odaga's *Between the Years* and *Endless Road*. More importantly, the section analyses significance of literary styles in heightening the position of the woman in a largely patriarchal society as depicted in Asenath Odaga's two novels.

4.2.2. Song and the Woman

Music and songs play an integral part to the human soul. Furthermore, music is therapeutic and just like poetry, communicates the most intricate feelings and emotions of persons. *The Endless Road* has one prime song that characterizes the musicality of Salmarie when she is smitten by Dino and is seemingly falling in love at a great speed. She employs song to express her intimate feelings of love towards him. It is because of the intensity of Salmarie's emotional situation that words cannot be spoken but rather, they have to be recited in a song to capture her true love towards Dino. Salmarie would sing all the love songs she knew and particularly:

My love whose teeth are small and whiter than egret feathers.
My love whose eyes dazzle like the young sun.
What language do I use to make the world understand we belong to each other?
We stood together in the cold night just talking,
lost in our love's world with you
my love whose beauty's like that of a girl from the sky.
It rained on us while we were together talking.
My love you've stolen my heart.
Sun blazed on us, witnessing our love.
You stand exalted above all I've known;
A, I love you my sweetheart, Jumamosi.
Darkness wallowed us while we stood and conversed.
Birds cooed while we were alone,
Bound together with strong invisible love's rope.
Yaye, my love Sweetheart, Dola's sister
Your beauty's like that of a girl from the sky.

I will love you to the end (Odaga,1995, p.24).

The above song shows an all-loving Salmarie who has admittedly become “childish” (Odaga, 1995, p. 24). She is lost in love and rhythm and melody of the songs communicates to us the love message because “rhythm and *harmonia* penetrate most deeply into the recess of the soul and take a powerful hold on to it” (Plato, 1994, p. 648). Salmarie uses the song to pass the message of love to Dino while exalting her soul. Pelosi argues that “in Platonic reflection, the authentic interlocutor of music is the soul” and that “music contributes to the philosophical cure of the soul as a very efficient manner of treating a vast array of psychic responses ranging from perception, emotion and desire to rational content” (Pelosi, 2010, p. 6). Thus according to Pelosi (ibid), philosophy utilizes music to nourish the soul. This is exactly what Salmarie aims to achieve when she repeatedly sings the love song.

On a rebellious note, Salmarie vocalizes the song at the wake of constant gossips and rumours from the society surrounding her wish to settle down with Dino in eternal matrimony. Salmarie thus uses this song to counteract the societal discourse working against her decision to love Dino. In this case, she comes out as a strong and decisive woman who can make her independent choices free from the whims of the overbearing society. She is at the business of nourishing her soul and keeping her mental health balanced by shoving off people she thinks are up to no good.

The song comes in handy to clearly show her resilience and bravery as a modern woman determined to show the society that women too have the ability, just like men to make personal judgements regarding any situation. The rebellion evident in the song mirrors the feminist phase of gynocriticism that is characterized by protest to male chauvinism and patriarchy. Gossips and rumours against the relationship between Salmarie and Dino are a product of skewed misrepresentation of women’s experiences

by men and particularly the jilted ones like Kabita who fell out of Salmarie's love and this is what she is resisting against. Gossipers and rumour-mongers are symbolically represented by words and phrases such as "darkness", "sun blazed" 'it rained on us' 'and "together in cold night". Victory against all these is well captured in the line... "Birds cooed while we were alone." (Odaga,1995, p.24)

4.2.3. Metaphorical Synthesis

Metaphors have been approached differently by various scholars of linguistics, philosophy and psychology. The word 'metaphor' stands for the Greek word 'transfer' where the word 'metaphor' in English comes from 'meta' (change) and 'pherein' (carry) (Thornborrow and Wareing, 1998, p. 79). It is widely believed among lay people and scholars that the origin of metaphor lies in literature because poets, by their creative genius, always create new metaphors which represent the most genuine examples of metaphor (Kovecses, 2010, p. 49). In fact, MacCormac writes that "Literature without metaphor would become less imaginative and poetry would be so impaired as to become dull and perhaps even trite" (1972, p. 57).

Odaga's two novels in this study are therefore not devoid of metaphors which fit into Newmark's definition of a metaphor as "any figurative expression: The transferred sense of a physical word; the personification of an abstraction; the application of a word and collocation to what it doesn't literally denote. Metaphors may be 'single' (one word) or extended (a collocation, an idiom, a sentence, a proverb, an allegory, a complete imaginative text") (Newmark, 1988, p. 3).

The scenario presented in *Endless Road* portraying Dino as an overly excessively jealous man presents a metaphor. Salmarie explains the genesis of the envy as emanating from a man who "had come to repair an electrical switch in my bedroom"

(Odaga, 1995, p. 20) when Dino found him there and like a “demented person, Dino was enraged by the presence of my colleague in my bedroom and to demonstrate his anger, he drove away in high speed almost crashing his vehicle on my gate” (Odaga, 1995, p. 20). The sensitivity of the bedroom, especially that of a married or engaged woman presents a metaphorical examination of the bedroom.

Being the room in the house ostensibly used to satisfy a couple’s conjugal rights, Dino is furious that Salmarie has allowed another man into such a unique room. For Dino, such an act is insulting, especially to his manhood and sexuality for what else would another man be doing with his wife in the bedroom if not preparing to have sex? Salmarie however seems to see such thoughts as outrageous and rants at Dino, “Goodness, what do you think I was doing with the man in my bedroom in the middle of the day? I can’t believe you have such a warped mind...” (Odaga, 1995, p. 20). Dino however is adamant that he could not bear the thought of Salmarie coming out of her bedroom with another man.

The situation dents Dino’s ego because it is for him, sexual intrusion for a man to be in a room that is exclusively meant for marital bliss. It is this sexual aggression from a stranger that Dino cannot tolerate. The bedroom can therefore be equated to a sex room and it’s injurious to masculine emotions for one to imagine another man inside his woman’s body and Dino ends the confrontation by telling Salmarie that, “...you will come to learn why I reacted that way” (Odaga,1995, p.21).

Salmarie’s resistance to that kind of masculine thinking is manifested in her ingenuity of seeing nothing wrong with some other man being in the bedroom to repair an electric fault for what is wrong to get assistance from another man if her man is absent at that

particular time of need? Salmarie typically rejects the stereotypical perception that it can only be sexual intercourse happening if a man and a woman are in the bedroom.

Salmarie herself is a metaphor for resilience and women's struggle when she eventually captures a parliamentary seat. Odaga is deliberate in her depiction of the political season where a woman emerges victorious while men tumble to excruciating loss. Her political win is indeed a win for all the women in her patriarchal society and it is an occasion for Odaga to break the societal bondage that appropriates politics only to men. Ordinarily in a patriarchal society like the one in Odaga's novels, the woman is seen as weak politically and therefore is not expected to give a male politician a challenge. This is a misconception in terms of the first tenet of gynocriticism and therefore Salmarie performs beyond expectations to beat this stereotype.

Through Salmarie, Odaga squashes the metanarrative that women cannot occupy leadership roles. Dino and Salmarie's brother both fail to capture their respective parliamentary seats, epitomizing the rise of femininity and women leadership. Through Salmarie, the position of the woman is heightened; the woman no longer belongs to the kitchen but rather has now risen to the decision making level. Odaga's attempt is aimed at constructing the woman just as equal to a man while portraying the emboldened resolve taken by women like Salmarie who challenge male dominance.

Salmarie helps women to move from the periphery and marginal positions to the centre because otherwise they will continue to be offered "a pinch of salt which wouldn't be enough to salt a family meal" (Odaga, 1995, p. 101) and thus Salmarie was trying to "get into parliament to put pressure and demand more for the women folk" (Odaga, 1995, p. 101). She can be seen as a feminine driving force to emancipate and free

women from the chains of patriarchy which for long has incapacitated and devalued the woman.

The political failure of Dino and Salmarie's brother can also be read at a metaphorical level to denote the fall of masculinity. The signification here being that of an end of an oppressive era and culture. The subjugation of the woman can happen no more and there is hope at last for a woman's voice to be heard. In this instance, the masculine position is neutralized to pave way for the new feminine wave that for Odaga seems unstoppable. Dino himself admitted that he shouldn't have contested the seat since he hadn't been home long enough to create impact and marshal enough grassroots support and he had not interacted enough with the voters. Her brother who contested the same seat with him had also been unsuccessful. On the contrary Salmarie had done so much groundwork by empowering women through self-help groups and easily won. Dino and Salmarie's brother were not meticulous in their campaigns and therefore the author advances the view that the male gender is disorganized hence their resounding defeat at the polls.

Seruya in *Between the Years* is a metaphorical character in the sense in which she acts as Apon's source of strength and encouragement. She is there to encourage Apon to try his hand in politics. When Apon is almost giving up on politics, he gets a renewed urge from the words of Seruya. It is worth noting that while the same persuasion has come from various quarters such as the elders and friends, Apon only seriously considers politics after Seruya talks to him. By implication, this means that Seruya has a special place in Apon's life. She is the 'engine' that propels him in his endeavours of life. Seruya is also central to the marital life between her and Apon. She struggles to keep the family fabric together in their marriage and even though her energy to keep the

family together wears out when she bolts out of the marriage and goes to her parents' home, Apon comes back seeking reconciliation.

Apon's action to seek forgiveness from his estranged wife is an attestation that of all the women he has been with, Seruya is the woman meant for him. Apon's realization therefore places Seruya at the metaphorical level of Eve in the Bible.

Lastly, the portrait of a pregnant woman that Apon and Ondu encounter in a room is quite metaphorical:

A marvelous painting: an almost life-size portrait of a pregnant woman. The fineness of the work had a queer effect on him. Each time he looked at it, he felt mesmerized as if he was seeing it for the first time. Now in the glow of the light, the fascination was enhanced. The woman looked real, as if she were pregnant with life itself ... the woman, he imagined, represented nature itself, while the baby inside her represented life. (Odaga, 1987, p. 119)

The woman here is a source of life and hope for men, through her Apon admittedly sees her worth. Through this portrait, Odaga seems to suggest that a woman may perhaps be worthier than a man because she is used by God to bring life of either gender to this world and as such ought to be much respected by men. Apon's realization through the portrait is therefore Odaga's way to defeat the gender stereotype that views women as useless. Young (1990) underscores gynocritical stand that places women's reproduction at a higher level of importance. She declares that:

Gynocentric feminism finds in women's bodies and traditional feminine activity the source of more positive values. Women's reproductive processes keep us linked with nature and the promotion of life to a greater degree than men's. Female eroticism is more fluid, diffuse, and loving than violence-prone male sexuality. Our feminine socialization and traditional roles as mothers give to us a capacity to nurture and a sense of social cooperation that may be the only salvation of the planet. (Young, 1990, p. 79)

Asenath Odaga similarly through the portrait of the woman places the woman at a higher ground than the man because of her nature of reproduction. She is able to carry

life in her own body up to the time of delivery. Odaga draws our sympathy to Apon's life that is under threat. He can only get redemption by returning back to Seruya and for the family and especially the children's well-being.

Metaphorical synthesis elevates the woman in terms of the theory of gynocriticism by forcing her to rediscover the past afresh, forging again and again the consciousness of their sex and therefore places her in a higher platform to resist stereotypes such as unwarranted jealousy and envy from the likes of Dino and Apon, political immaturity fronted by patriarchy that a woman is not suitable to lead and more importantly that a woman is able to bring forth life of either gender.

4.2.4. Flashback as a Narrative Style

Since flashback is a narrative technique, it is important to first understand what a narrative technique is. Groenewald (1995) describes narrative technique as the arranging of events by confirming or disconfirming them, while Mojalefa (1995) contends that narrative techniques are different ways authors can choose to arrange the events in literary texts.

According to Mojafela and Phala (2005) flashback is one of the techniques used in what narratologists call the second level of a text, that is the plot. Strachan (1990) argues that there are different kinds of flashbacks. He states that for instance:

... a distinction can be made between external retrospection (which lies outside the space of time of the primary story), internal retrospection (which lies inside the space of time of the primary story) and mixed retrospection (which begins outside the space of time of the primary story and ends within it) (Strachan 1990, p. 101).

According to Mafela (1997) and Baldick (1990) flashback implies the narrator's interruption of the chronological sequence of events in a literary work. By inserting past

events while facing new ones, the narrator relates both sets of events. Cuddon (1979) summarizes the functions of flashback by saying that the technique reminds the reader of past events; reveals and develops themes of a text; and supplies background information of characters and events. Mafela (1997) confirms this by saying that:

Flashback is the technique mostly used by authors to supply background information of characters and events. The author waits until things are moving and then goes back to fill in the necessary background information.

Mafela's kind of flashback is conspicuous in Odaga's *Endless Road*. It is significant in giving background information to female characters such as Salmarie and her grandmothers and Bita who are all embodiments of strong and resilient women in the struggle to voice the plight of women and reclaim positions in their society in order to defeat gendered stereotypes.

Salmarie's genesis of her strength and determination is relayed to us through flashback. A story is told of her grandmother who she is named after and who she draws courage from. Her community is one which believes in protective strength from the dead and as such Salmarie says that the "spirit of my grandmother would come to my assistance through my own determination and strong will power" (Odaga, 1995, p. 63). She further goes on to illustrate her grandmother's courage who had "single handedly and lonely fought and retrieved her goat from a leopard which had seized it in her house" (Odaga, 1995, p. 64). Salmarie relays this flashback to bring us to speed about her present predicament where she has to slay the dragon troubling her husband. She enlists the help of *juogi* to fight the evil spirit in her observation that:

...the powerful evil spirit confusing my husband, was like a wild beast, a leopard...to diffuse these unproductive powers I had to fight and get rid of the evil spirits at all costs...I communicated with their spirits and as if I had changed my own spirit with that of my grandmother. I began to chant and belch, I shivered as sweat poured out of my face like a person

struck by fever. I wasn't in control of myself. My spirit became detached from this earthly body and I slipped into that timelessness and watched this earthly body as if it didn't belong to me! I had become possessed with Ajienda's *juogi* (Odaga, 1995, p. 64).

Odaga therefore employs flashback at this instance to educate us on the attributes of her lead character, Salmarie and we can understand through the style, the motivation behind Salmarie's fight against masculine prejudices and stereotypes. In essence, Salmarie picks up from where her grandmother left and fights on to liberate the woman. She has a role model who constantly reminds her that she must relentlessly continue asserting herself against male dominance. The power she imbibes from the grandmother is therefore crucial in catapulting Salmarie to an equilibrium cultural state where woman is equal to a man. Salmarie emerges as a courageous character thereby beating the stereotype of a weakling which is a negative representation as per the second tenet of gynocriticism. She debunks and deconstructs the myth that women are weak.

Dino's current personality is also explained in a flashback technique, an attempt by the author to raise awareness to the readers about Dino's current psychological makeup. His childhood is depicted to have been tumultuous. His childhood "experiences and his father's image as a sex maniac, the talk about his family curse by his great grandmother and a host of other allegations had negative effects on his psychological well-being" (Odaga, 1995, p. 66). Marital life had also had an impact on his social life. Salmarie informs us that:

His experience with his two former wives had hurt and bruised his ego immensely. Dino had a complex which he covered up by being aggressive and arrogant. Consequently, he had developed a negative attitude towards life and people in general, but specifically towards women and more so, towards any who happened to be close to him. Thus in spite of his great love for me his attitude towards me was almost hostile. (Odaga, 1995, p. 65)

Dino's psychological disorder thus confuses Salmarie who must help her husband to overcome mental tribulations. To do this, she must first understand Dino's state which the author alludes to in a flashback. It is because of this technique that both Salmarie and the readers are able to appreciate Dino's behavior that has affected his perspectives on life. His past experiences therefore explain his disgust and detest against women who he feels are worthless creatures and nothing good can come out of them. He is skeptical of his current relationship with Salmarie ostensibly because he sees her as being no different from his previous former wives. His hostility towards women can then be understood through the relaying of this flashback. Gallagher and Parrot (2012) explain the psychological stress that is behind male hostility to their female counterparts especially when they are not able to respond to their standards that have been set by masculinity. They say that:

more specifically, masculine gender role stress refers to men's tendency to experience negative psychological (e.g., insecurity, low self-esteem, increased anger) and physiological effects (e.g., increased cardiovascular reactivity and skin conductance) from their attempts to meet societally-based standards of the male role. (Gallagher&Parrot,2012, p.5)

Gynocriticism treats this state of hostility towards women as a stereotype that has to be resisted by Salmarie using all means available. We get to know that Dino has had his fair share of failure with his past lovers, one committed suicide while another just left because of Dino's sexual dysfunction. Salmarie surmounts Dino's failure by prescribing for him traditional healing. Salmarie actually turns out to be Dino's savior for she engineers the defeat of the old curse that had been imposed on their generation by her grandmother Sombre.

In a flashback, Salmarie's mother also intimates to the character of Bitá, Salmarie's maternal grandmother. Bitá is described to have been a fierce woman who would not take any aggression lying down even if it came from a man. A story is told of how she

dealt heavy blows to a local missionary who had negated and downplayed the importance of funeral customs. Christianity was used against the African ritual, something that angered Bitá to greater lengths. Her toughness is manifested when she unleashes wrath on the missionary:

...Bitá quietly went where he was sitting and dealt him mighty blows one after another, with her walking stick! The missionary had to flee on a horse back. The following day, after this incident, Bitá was arrested and taken to court, but she wasn't sorry for her action. She said if the Missionary went again to her home, she'd once again hit him with even a bigger stick...even then, while being led away...she was still defiant. She still muttered threats and used heavy words to warn the white missionary never to set foot in her home again. She was fearless (Odaga, 1995, p. 49).

In her continued rant, Bitá shows her courage against not just an African man, but a European who she does not mince her words about:

This snatcher of other people's children. You have a wife; why didn't you have a child of your own to do with whatever you like. You will be the light dry wood with which that fire will be started and the first to burn in that lake of fire you've been talking about...He is big and hefty, but he is probably a *poko* – gourd, *mingli*, no fire with which to start a life in a woman! Imagine, he dares say he forgave me because I don't know what I am doing when I hit him with my stick! Eeh, I dare him to come to my home again parading as a killer of evil practices (Odaga, 1995, p. 49).

The white missionary is depicted to have been cruel to Africans. He would force them to go to church every Sunday and whoever disobeyed met the wrath of his long whip. In another flashback, it is made known to us that the missionary at one point beat up Bitá when she was young. Bitá swore to revenge in later years arguing that a “white man whom I don't know and is also not my husband can't beat me and get away with it” (Odaga, 1995, p. 50). This sort of resistance that is depicted by the author reflects radical feminism that is a form of gynocritical rebellion against mistreatment of women. Dworkin (1988) says that the aim of radical feminists is to resist violence in all its manifestations. He says... “radical feminists seek to liberate all women from oppression.

We side with women resisting male violence in all its forms, including rape, porn, prostitution, female infanticide, and forced birth” (Dworkin, 1988, p.270). Asenath Odaga borrows from radical feminism to resist this chauvinism and male supremacy. Later on in the text Bitu uses militant means to exact revenge on the white missionary and she actually whips him thoroughly and this revenge is served in a cold manner. It is quite clear that the streak of resistance against masculinities in Salmarie is inherited from her grandmothers who form a solid inspiration and motivation to overturn the status quo in her society. The precedent was already set by the grandmothers and therefore Salmarie does not wish to let them down. Her spirit is constantly re-awakened by the deviant blood that seems to flow through her veins.

Dino’s tribulations are also relayed through a flashback. A story is narrated of how he is a descendant of a cursed generation. The curse is believed to have emanated from his great grandmother who was disgruntled by the way her family and the village in general neglected and treated her with contempt. The fact that her own daughter, Kalanga forcefully ejected Sombre out of their home left Sombre heavily dejected and “she left our home singing and crying bitterly lamenting over her desolation and rotten luck” (Odaga, 1995, p. 34). She left as she sung her sad song thus:

Who’ll escort me, dio x2
Alendo who has no escort
Kusa the daughter of Atieno, dio
Alendo who has no escort
The daughter of Otieno, dio
Who’ll escort me, dio x2
Alendo who has no escort
Kusa the daughter of Atieno, dio
Alendo who has no escort.

This song laments Sombre's loneliness for lack of a place to call home despite having descendants. She has been forsaken and this song is cathartic since it helps her to surmount the emotions of rejection.

Salmarie's mother narrates that before she left home, Sombre and Kalanga:

...had a bitter quarrel the whole of that week and in utter rage she had cursed her daughter saying her descendants would never know peace until one of them built her a house where her spirit could rest after her death...by the time she left our home, she was bitter and there was very bad blood between mother and daughter. People believe the curse is the reason why none of Kalanga's grandchildren, Dino included, are settled or properly married (Odaga, 1995, pp. 36-37).

This curse seems to have affected Dino's future life of 'properly getting married' because he has already experienced two failed marriages. One wife left him because of sexual complications while the other committed suicide. His tragedy thus has historical pronouncements but this revelation through a flashback has situated Salmarie in a good position to now devise better ways to tackle not just a medical condition but battle a longstanding curse. She is optimistic that Dino's problem can be solved because there are ways of "treating and reverting such afflictions" (Odaga, 1995, p. 40) through traditional methods. Radical feminism places the woman at a central position rather than the margin in providing a quick solution to Dino's impotence. Johnson (2020) observes that the core beliefs of radical feminism lies in its revolution in dislodging patriarchal thinking. He says that its principle lies in:

evaluating and then breaking down traditional gender roles in private relationships as well as in public policies..... A critique of motherhood, marriage, the nuclear family, and sexuality, questioning how much of our culture is based on patriarchal assumptions (Johnson,2020, p.1-2).

Although Salmarie is a Christian, as well as her family, they resort to traditional ways to try and help Dino overcome the curse and sexual dysfunction. Odaga heightens the role of traditional healing process. In a patriarchal society sexual dysfunction and infertility

are all lumped on the female. Salmarie resists this stereotype by seeking traditional healing for her husband and she is therefore proving that sexual dysfunction is a shared responsibility between the man and the woman. Asenath Odaga comes from the traditional Luo Society where barrenness and infertility is often viewed as a female problem, however, through Salmarie's theatrics in using traditional healing for sexual dysfunction we realize that men also contribute to it and that it is not a preserve of women.

Ogembo (2005) argues that long before colonialism came to Africa, Africans relied upon their traditional medicine to cure various maladies. He posits that for "every disease, when the hospital failed, people resorted to their long trusted ways" (Ogembo, 2005, p. 3). Salmarie and her family seem to be much aware of this situation so that after trying in vain to offer modern medication to Dino's condition, they resort to traditional herbs which eventually work to stabilize Dino's sexual functioning. His curse is also cured using this traditional process. A medicine man is consulted to neutralize the curse. This case is well captured by Ogembo who posits that:

The medicine men who are sought out to heal victims of witchcraft also depend, to a large extent, on the use of some objects and things as signs and symbols. When these things and objects remain the same for healing and witchcraft, it is the interpretation that could determine whether the signs and symbols are lifesaving or life threatening. (Ogembo, 2005, p. 5)

Salmarie thus gets into a matrimonial contract with Dino knowing too well what she is getting herself into. She beats all odds to emerge strongly at the end when he helps Dino overcome his sexual and psychological disruptions and transcend a beautiful life beyond the curse. Salmarie is very much aware that "people have had marital problems without the element of a curse coming in" (Odaga, 1995, p. 40). They eventually, though after a tumultuous journey, have a successful marriage where children and grandchildren are

born. Salmarie resists the stereotype of sexual dysfunction and infertility and through gynocriticism the author shatters the belief in the patriarchal society that women are always to blame for sexual difficulties in marriage. This therefore is a call for review of how patriarchy treats matters of reproductive health.

That Dino's puzzle is finally solved by a woman (Salmarie), implies that the power of a feminine person should not be underestimated as has been the case previously. Odaga positions the women in this text as problem solving people who are on course to rewrite history of the previous relegated gender. Through Salmarie, Odaga seems to map out new territory for the women characters and restores new identity for the female self which now places the woman at a respectable ground and takes away the feelings of inadequacy that have characterized women.

Similarly, in *Between the Years*, Jane Mbura, in a flashback relays to us the unfortunate state of the women in her society where meritocracy for employment does not apply to women. She recalls one instance where:

She had been able to get another job, but only after she compromised herself. Yes, that is the way things stood in this country, and who was she to think of going against them? It was worse for the woman...Jane recalled how she had been unable to get a job when she came from abroad where she had higher education. The men holding the employment opportunities would not engage a woman unless she owed some favours on them. As a woman nobody expected you to get a job without first sleeping with someone. (Odaga, 1987, p. 109-110)

This flashback is used by Odaga to remind us of the manner in which the woman's body is stereotyped by men in a patriarchal society. Men want to engage in sexual intercourse with women in exchange for favours with little regard for the dignity of the woman. To proceed with life however, women like Jane in *Between the Years* offer their bodies for

sex but only due to lack of options and this she does immediately she comes from abroad where she had gone for further studies. They live past the shame and sojourn on with life bravely. Even for women who achieve great career heights, the society, and largely the male characters do not believe that it is simply out of sheer hard work. The stereotype from men is that a successful woman ought to have slept with a man to obtain favours. However, the hardworking woman beats this sexually-acquired-success stereotype to emerge victorious without the help of a man. Through gynocriticism Odaga in her novels under this study envisages an independent woman who is on a path of self-discovery and that she does not need to rely on favours. Elaine Showalter reminds us that the first mode of gynocriticism is to expose us to women's writing that disassociates female characters from negative representation, stereotyping and misconceptions. She says that:

it is concerned with the feminist as reader, and it offers feminist readings of texts which consider the images and stereotypes of women in literature, the omissions and misconceptions about women in criticism, and woman-as-sign in semiotic systems. (Showalter,1981, p.182)

Asenath Odaga through the character of Jane Mbura resists this negative sexual objectification of the woman, that a woman must give out sexual favours in order to get employment. She calls out on the society to look afresh at the issue at hand and resist the stereotype at all costs. Odaga calls for an interrogation of how the society has treated women's sexual exploitation without raising an alarm and therefore this is a humble call for transformation. Odaga echoes similar sentiments that have been expressed by Adrienne Rich who observes that:

A radical critique of literature, feminist in its impulse, would take the work first of all as a clue to how we live, how we have been living, how we have been led to imagine ourselves, how the very act of naming has been till now a male prerogative, and how we can begin to see and name—and therefore—live afresh (Rich,1972, p.18)

4.2.5. Conclusion

The styles mentioned in the texts under study heighten the female characters' resistance to masculine stereotypes. This sub-section has analyzed the place of the song as a social construct for rebellion and Salmarie has used the song to voice her heart out and make her intentions known to the world. Metaphors have also been analyzed to draw out the coded language and approach used by Odaga to emancipate the women characters and flashback as a narrative technique has been explored to show its treatment in the novels as a tool of redemption for the woman by tracking her past.

4.3. Thematic Preoccupation Vis- a- Vis Female Emancipation

4.3.1. Introduction

This section examines the major thematic concerns in the selected novels and their relation to liberation of the woman person. Themes pass on the content being communicated by a literary author and therefore significance is attached to the themes that are discussed in this section.

4.3.2. Politics, Masculinity and the Woman

Kabugi (2016) contends that women's representation and participation in politics has been an uphill task throughout the world. She continues to posit that Kenya is one of the countries with observably low participation of women in the political process. On his part, Kariuki (2010) observes that even though women make up about fifty-two percent of the population, decision making has remained largely minimal and marginal to women since Kenya's independence. However, Andrade (1998) posits that "one can say that increasingly African women write about politics, including national politics" (Andrade, 1998, 207). Such women include Asenath Odaga who tackles the political position of the female characters in her works. In this case the theory of radical

feminism plays a greater role since women come to the fore to compete men head on unlike in other instances when they take the back seat.

The political atmosphere in Odaga's *Endless Road* is a typical masculine one where women entry is almost entirely prohibited. It is a difficult political situation that strong-willed characters such as Salmarie have to grapple with and compete with men and overall patriarchal thinking in a bid to break the masculine impasse in order to create a conducive political climate for the woman. Andrade (ibid) affirms that "no longer can we say that sub-Saharan women hesitate to represent the nation in conjunction with fully developed female" (Andrade, 1998, p. 206). Salmarie is such a developed political character who goes out full swing to join the mucky political terrain.

Trouble for Salmarie begins when she announces her intention to be a member of the August house. Her ambition is compounded by the complexity of a husband and wife both at the same time being interested in elective politics. It is this situation that aggravates political tension, not just in the whole country but also in a family that is on the verge of collapse because of political ambitions. Dino is opposed to the idea of his wife plunging into mucky political waters which he deems only fit for a man. Dino feels that Salmarie should "drop the idea and instead be prepared to give him full and undivided support and loyalty" (Odaga, 1995, p. 80). Salmarie seems to be much aware of this patriarchal inclinations about her ambition. She quips thus, "Perhaps you as a reader will point accusing fingers at me and condemn me for forgetting my position as an African wife!" (Odaga, 1995, p. 80). Nakamura (1999) says that Dino's worldview on the role of women is widely known, "...the root-cause of the matter is simply the fact that Dino and other people have been so socialized into the male-centred worldview

that they never question the legitimacy of the traditional gender roles” (Nakamura,1999, p.74).

Salmarie’s determination is however unstoppable as she wants to hear none of it. She argues that a woman is “capable of being a faithful wife, a mother and everything else, and still have an independent mind” (Odaga, 1995, p. 80). She is therefore contesting masculine stereotyping in a society that has not witnessed such an aggressive woman. This driving force is psychological in nature and it keeps her going. Nakamura (1999) asserts that for Salmarie to realize this dream, then the solution is hinged on her proactive role as an agent of change, “to build the new gender relations must mean to deconstruct the legitimacy of the traditional gender roles within individual’s mind and to construct new models within their heart” (Nakamura,1999, p.74).

While Karuru (2001) identifies cultural factors, economic empowerment and political party structures and institutions as a portion of the variables impacting ladies’ political cooperation, Salmarie is destined to rewrite history. She frees herself from family structural bondage where a woman is only expected to be a submissive wife who should not yearn for self-independence.

Due to her strong urge to serve the people, Salmarie cannot comprehend how her family and the society wish she shuns her political ambition in favour of her husband. Her adamant position on political issues drives the husband to at first resort to silent confrontation which is practically a psychological torture directed towards Salmarie. This results in the start of an end to marital bliss between Dino and Salmarie and consequently the society discriminated against her because of her gender but she is set to “carry the battle to its bitter end” (Odaga, 1995, p. 83). The battle is not easy and Dino warns her:

...I repeat what I have told you over a thousand times. Sal, it is not that we are undermining your ability to get to parliament and be an effective legislator on account of gender. But as your brother told you, this is not the right time for you a woman to stand for election. It is going to be tough, rough and ruthless. The game isn't for a woman. (Odaga, 1995, p. 85)

All this while, Salmarie is putting a spirited effort against patriarchy and masculinities by forging a feminine uprising against male wave in the politics of the land. She is the epitome of the feminist wing in the region and wants to prove to everyone that women can be just as good political leaders as men, if not better. At this instance, Salmarie wants to end political oppression that has been meted against women and create a level ground battle field where women have equal political opportunities with men. She wishes to deconstruct male dominance in the political scene.

Salmarie as an unstoppable feminine force is seen in her utterance that, "Nothing and nobody will make me change my mind" (Odaga, 1995, p. 85). Dino on the other hand is constantly reminding his wife that she, as a woman is exposing herself to danger. This reminder is sexist, and is made to scare Salmarie to move out of political race. Campbell (2010) contends that all over the world, there appears to be hindrances to ladies' cooperation in politics than men. Odaga's text is full of these hurdles that are placed by the patriarchal society. The danger herein lies in threats from her very own home and it is championed by her husband Dino who feels threatened by the political growth of Salmarie at his own expense. During the campaigns Dino hires goons to harass her and this almost turns catastrophic since one of the hirelings almost rapes her. Dino thinks that Salmarie is a weakling who cannot stand the rigours of a political campaign and therefore is emasculated. This is the reason Dino thinks that he should go ahead to vie for a political seat and not his wife. Dino who is symbolic of patriarchy and masculinity sees it strange and ambitious for a woman to seek political leadership at the

behest of family. Dino even goes to the extent of threatening his wife with violence in order to intimidate her. In one instance in their ensuing heated argument, Dino calls Salmarie a stupid woman and tells her, “I could fish out your tongue to make you shut up forever. I repeat again, you will not get into politics as my wife” (Odaga, 1995, p. 87). This threat is that of a man who wants to disown his ambitious wife but it does not deter Salmarie. Cooper (1982) posits that women go up against push while at work, home and in social circumstances. This presently is the situation Salmarie finds herself in. She has to work against the forces of her husband at their home and that of societal pressure to shelve her political ambitions.

Dino uses derogatory language while referring to her as stupid and an old woman but Salmarie hits back at her husband’s age saying “an old man of sixty becoming a youth winger of an equally old party. *Ati mimi mzee* – a grandmother, what about you?” (Odaga, 1995, p. 87). Such is an assertion from a female figure against patriarchal oppression. The feminine voice here is raised to counter that of the man in an attempt to create gender equality. Salmarie thus speaks up against masculinity and wants men to see not just fault in women but also in themselves too.

Salmarie is flabbergasted by the open aggression directed towards her by Dino, the embodiment of oppression. When push comes to shove, Salmarie is ready to engage in a physical combat with Dino to prove she is not a walk over. She tells us that, “we had never fought physically since our marriage, but I was on that day ready for a physical combat” (Odaga, 1995, p. 87). Salmarie is ready for confrontation because she is censored by Dino for no good reason except that she is his wife and is expected to stand down for him and for this she is being bullied day and night. Salmarie counters the physical threats to her life by openly invoking the freedom of association enshrined in

the constitution. Dino feels cornered and stops talking to her and by this way Salmarie resists open and physical confrontation from Dino.

Salmarie yearns to break socio-political chains that derail the spirit of gender equality and emancipation of the woman. Her political ambition is a worthy cause that will benefit all humanity, regardless of gender. She wants to be part of the political leadership thus curing Africa's perennial maladies:

The wretchedness and the human degradation in African countries, perpetual famine and sickness with the new scourge, AIDS all marched strongly with us. The poverty, the never ending civil wars, genocide and ignorance that continued to strive in Africa were appalling and embarrassing to its sons and daughters. To continue to be a laughing stock of the entire world community for decades, was not a matter that was to be taken for granted. It was time, all of us in this continent took stock of our situation. (Odaga, 1995, p. 88)

Salmarie craves for uplifting the lives of underprivileged women in her area of jurisdiction. She tells the women electorate that the "next election was going to be our second liberation and we'd have to ask ourselves many soul searching questions as women" (Odaga, 1995, p. 101). By representation of women, researchers have recognized two types of representation; elucidating and substantive representation (Celis & Childs, 2008). Elucidating representation is referred to as "standing for constituents" because of shared social characteristics, in this case, women standing for women. Salmarie goes for this kind of representation because she rises up for women issues and rights. She wants therefore to be a politician so that she can get a better platform to quest for women liberation.

The eventual outcome of the elections has Salmarie triumphing while Dino fails to capture the parliamentary seat. In terms of gynocriticism, the stereotype of inability to provide leadership by women is shattered by Salmarie. The second tenet of gynocriticism promotes themes that are feminist in agenda. This scenario leads to Dino's acceptance that a woman leader is now in the offing. Salmarie reports that Dino

got “up, hugged and congratulated me and said he was proud of me and my success” (Odaga, 1995, p. 131). This statement presents the genesis for a family reconciliation after a bruising political battle while at the same time illustrating the political triumph of a woman against masculinity.

To quell the tension Dino admittedly says that “he shouldn’t have contested the seat: since he hadn’t been home long enough to create an impact and marshal enough grassroots support” (Odaga, 1995, p. 132). Salmarie’s political win is therefore an embodiment of pure resistance of a strong woman against masculine stereotypes. Salmarie therefore is the epitome of women who “represent the nation squarely and explicitly” (Andrade, 1998, p. 208).

While at the celebration mood, Salmarie is keen to strengthen her bond with her husband and children which portrays a strong woman who is determined to be a political leader, a wife and a mother. That she does not abdicate her familial roles beats the stereotype that women in leadership are hard headed creatures who cannot keep a husband. She shames the expectation of the society when she mends her relationship with her husband telling Dino thus:

Isn’t the fact that I came to fetch you from home enough evidence and an indication of my willingness for a reconciliation and forgiveness? Voice of reason doesn’t need to be vocal in certain situations... Remember I told you that nothing, not even politics would come between us. You remember the day you told me you’d have nothing to do with me? This was at the beginning of the campaign when I came to accompany you on your rallies? Think how I pushed myself to be to sit on your side? I am still the same. I haven’t changed my stand. I still love and care for you immensely. I’ll not hold grudges against you. Let’s forget everything and begin again. It is not too late yet (Odaga, 1995, p. 136).

All this come to much surprise for Dino, who obviously did not expect this kind of forgiveness. He is apologetic for all the turmoil he caused his wife. Salmarie triumphs

as the family's enlightened member who wishes to maintain balanced gender relations.

Goettner-Abendroth (2009) states that:

...women's strong position in these societies does not mean that matriarchies are women's autocracies. Rather, in matriarchies women's power is counterbalanced by men's power, so that neither sex dominates the other. The governing principle of these societies is balance, rather than domination. (Goettner- Abendroth, 2009, p. 1)

The couple thus agrees to soldier on with life, love and Salmarie is at the epicentre in her statement that:

So I will continue to grapple and wrestle with obstacles as I reach them determined to be a good legislator, a mother, a lover, a wife, a friend and most of all a woman and a human being. I'll continue to jostle along together with you: all my children out there: you are the most valuable and essential tools in building this nation as we follow this endless path of life! (Odaga, 1995, p. 138)

On the other hand, in *Between the Years*, Jane Mbura, Apon's mistress, attends a mass political rally at Kamukunji in Eastlands and is dismayed at the kind of falsehoods and fallacies propagated by the political class. The reality is that peasants are being taken advantage of. The political class is symbolically represented by Apon who arrived earlier on for the meeting. Brokers and middlemen have taken over the economy. Jane notes that indeed the country has equal opportunities for everybody but she notes that there are those men who are privileged and who can go to the bank and get a loan for any amount they want and who will never be harassed to make repayments. Jane notes that:

Yes, it is free country with equal opportunities for everybody, but they forget that there are those who are privileged. Those men who can go to the bank and get a loan for any amount they want and who will never be harassed to make repayments. Yes, it's very well to tell *wananchi* they could get to the top if they worked hard and diligently, while in the meantime the gap between the haves and the have-nots grows wider and more noticeable to anyone with eyes to see and a mind to comprehend (Odaga, 1987, p109).

This points to the unfortunate financial circumstances women find themselves in because they do not control the means of production. The writer here debunks the theory of capitalism. As Claudia Von Werlhof (2009) argues that, we know that a commodity, that money, capital, a machine, cannot be transformed back into living nature. Our only hope is that we are not totally commodified, machinized, monetarized, alchemized, housewifized, patriarchalized, and enslaved.

The women in this case are not operating in a free capitalized society and thus they suffer double otherization from men. Women are mere spectators in a masculine capitalist environment and feminist characters like Jane are hated for questioning such a patriarchal order. Vaughan (1997) opines that we understand that a capitalist system of exchange encourages people to see each other as opportunities for personal gain. In this case, women like Jane are viewed as commodities available for men's gains.

In countering this narrative, Shurgart (2018) argues that feminism critiques how capitalism and patriarchy work symbiotically to increase male domination. It is from this understanding that women characters in *Between the Years* endeavour to work and earn a living for themselves in order to reduce or even eliminate dependency on men.

Elaine Showalter through gynocriticism advances the theory of resistance to masculine stereotypes in political representation of women's identities. It is this reality that Asenath Odaga presents in her texts. Her main female characters are defying servitude from the examples shown. Showalter is against negative discriminations of women based on all criteria of categorization. In the above illustrations capitalism favours men at the expense of women and this is a discrimination of sorts. Showalter says that this must be resisted through setting new standards and models and not relying on patriarchal expectations and delineations. She observes that gynocritics must decide:

to construct a female framework for the analysis of women literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experiences, rather than to adapt male models and theories (Showalter,1985, p.131).

4.3.3. Heartaches: Dynamics of Love

There are three women characters deeply in love in Odaga's *Endless Road*; Salmarie the protagonist of the novel, her mother, and Flora, her mother-in-law, who all are to a large extent at the whims of love. It is not without a cost however because their hearts go through fragile metamorphosis of make or break. For the three women, it is a journey of self-sacrifice, perseverance and determination to stay afloat the ocean of love. Salmarie's mother's love life is not without hurdles. It flourishes at first but she encounters her husband's philandering behaviours which bring an ugly situation while in Tanzania. She demands that her husband comes clean on the women he has. The husband's philandering symptoms cause her great psychological turmoil and distress though at the end they together grow out of the quagmire and form a strong love bond. By demanding for accountability, Salmarie's mother is just living to the expectations of gynocriticism which is resistance to unfair representation of women. Salmarie's mother cannot accept to be a subordinate in a love relationship.

Flora, Dino's mother also had fallen in deep love with her husband who later turned out to be a philanderer. Though she sticks with her cheating husband, she drifts into solitude and leads a miserable life. Her husband finally dies in a love triangle gone sour, he is stabbed to death and ironically she enjoys life more as a widow. In her resilience to defend love, she is constantly advising Salmarie, her daughter-in-law, to make her marriage work out with Dino. Flora is much aware of the heartaches that women suffer in the name of love but still insists that women must cling to love in order to show their feminine strength. Flora ostensibly is of the view that women embrace love to conquer

hate and suffering and thus, love is a feminine weapon against masculine destruction. Resistance as an aspect of this study and by extension to the theory of gynocriticism is evident when Flora offers Salmarie on the advice for successful marriage having suffered in the past. The stereotype that the woman must suffer from heartbreak is resisted in the text.

Salmarie's love story has a false start. She encounters Dino, a mysterious handsome man whom she at first does not seem to like. In their first encounter, she gets the impression that Dino is a bully and outright chauvinist. At their first meeting, Salmarie says that "masculinity and virility oozed around" Dino but she was "mesmerized by the man's handsomeness" (Odaga, 1995, p. 8). By implication, this means that Salmarie was smitten and would ostensibly keep up with Dino, including his masculinities. Salmarie's attraction was evident but she still was not sure if what she was getting herself into was the right thing. Her previous love affair with Kabita, her ex-boyfriend had backfired and this had hurt Salmarie a great deal. Kabita had ditched Salmarie for his late brother's wife. The frustrated Salmarie says that:

Kabita had jilted me because he had found a bird in hand to be truly worth two in the bush! But the truth was that he ditched me because I had been awarded a scholarship by Kosieko Sugar Factory and was going for post graduate studies in sugar technology while he was ready for marriage. (Odaga, 1995, p. 10)

In her resistance to stereotype masculinities, Salmarie has chosen to reject the charm of getting married and instead chooses education. Reason transcended emotions for Salmarie and Kabita could not put up with this situation. This history with love then presents Salmarie with a dilemma because here now is a man who "wants to pick up where Kabita had left" (Odaga, 1995, p. 11). There is much skepticism exhibited by Salmarie when she says:

How could I be sure he too wouldn't leave me for another woman and or resent for my education? Anyway, time had cure and restored my broken heart that had hurt for so long! Now at twenty-seven I was convinced I had gathered some experience, and I had learnt to be cautious so as to avoid being hurt once again in the name of love. And I guarded my feelings jealously. (Odaga, 1995, p. 11)

It is in this mood of skepticism that Salmarie had not responded to some of the letters Dino had sent her in an attempt to remain non-committal since Kabita had hurt her sensibilities and she "didn't wish to have anything to do with men" but the "first meeting with Dino marked the beginning of an unending love story and somewhat a stormy relationship" (Odaga, 1995, p. 15). Salmarie had previously succeeded in wading off love and healing from it and its attendant masculinities by moving past Kabita's mess but it seemed she was up to doing it all over again once more for "someone often said, love like death has no calendar" (Odaga, 1995, p. 16). Salmarie's cautious doubt is temporarily confirmed when Dino goes silent for one month. Salmarie says in this one month:

...he disappeared, I missed him and my heart ached and longed so much for him. I truly castigated myself for having lost my heart to a fellow who could profess fervent love to a woman today, and then disappear for a month without a word or a trace of his whereabouts. Yet I missed him and longingly looked at all vehicles that passed on the road next to my company house (Odaga, 1995, p. 17).

This sort of fluctuating feelings characterized the on and off intimate relationship between Dino and Salmarie and fragility of their love was quite outspoken. When Dino resurfaced, he treated Salmarie like she was the first woman he had ever courted. However, Salmarie reports that "within a month, of our engagement, our relationship ran into problems due to what I saw as Dino's excessive jealousy" (Odaga, 1995, p. 19)

In addition, Jane Mbura's mother in *Between the Years* shares the same fate as that of Salmarie's mother and Flora, her mother-in-law. Jane's mother observes that she:

Had to bring her up alone because she would not marry her father as a second wife when she discovered that he was a married man. He had all along cheated her he was a bachelor, and that he would marry her. (Odaga, 1987, p. 110)

Jane's mother suffers heartaches and betrayal of love, but unlike the other women remains unmarried because of the treacherous nature of her man. Her husband- to -be takes advantage of her naivety to exercise masculinity against the woman. In keeping two women at the same time, this man is a chauvinist who thinks that men can use and dump women at any point because he feels men are the ones in charge of love and women should only be passive participants. While Jane's mother remains a single mother, the man in question on the other hand is happily married and has no regard for the poor woman. The first mode of gynocriticism is concerned with omissions and misconceptions about women in general and Asenath Odaga writes to correct the wrong misconceptions presented on women. One wrong misconception evident is that it is women who must suffer heartaches at the expense of men. This is a great injustice to the women fraternity and therefore it has to be resisted by all and sundry. In this connection Jane Mbura's mother resists by failing to be married after the heartbreak that she suffers from the philandering ways of Jane's father whom we understand is married.

Seruya in *Between the Years*, just as Salmarie, is skeptical of love. In her naive formative years, she is introduced to Apon, her future husband. Firstly, Seruya does not show much interest of falling in love with Apon but rather concentrates with her focus in education. In fact, she pushes Apon to fall in love with other women. At that moment, Seruya supposes that love will distract her ambition and she would rather stay away from it. When she finally falls in love with Apon, their journey starts off smoothly but runs into infidelity issues where Apon starts extra-marital affairs with women including Jane Mbura, his longtime clandestine lover. Such loose sexual behaviour by

Apon leaves Seruya severely hurt. In her protestation she temporarily quits her marriage. This rebellious act against the chains of love proves that she cannot allow her dignity degraded even for the sake of love. In further protest, she engages in intimate affair with Tim to hit back at her husband in what seems to be her celebration of her sexuality. In dismantling patriarchy, Seruya uses female sexuality as a powerful female tool against oppression. Sherfey (1966) opines that women's sexual drive and urge is superior than that of men serving as a powerful destabilizer of social order. Seruya thus uses her female sexual drive to dismantle the society's patriarchal view that it is more abominable for a woman to engage in extra-marital affairs than a man. Radical feminism envisages that the woman fights for her space. The women mentioned resist the pain of heartaches by bolting from love relationships that are unfavourable by default and design.

In this regard, Baumeister and Twenge (2002) argue that "the double standard of sexual morality has condemned certain sexual activities by women while permitting the identical actions for men." (p.166) Seruya thus uses her body for sexual relationship with a man, other than her husband as a tool of rebellion against sexual gender stereotypes where married men are allowed to practice extramarital affairs but women are not allowed.

4.3.4. The Woman as a Radical Feminist

Lewis (2020) contends that radical feminists are combative in their approach of subverting patriarchal roots of oppression between the genders. Asenath Odaga in the two novels under study portrays the lead female characters as radical feminists who are establishing themselves as forces to reckon with. These female characters have shown level headedness in countering masculine inequalities evident through physical battles, political contests and threats of infidelity.

In *Between the Years*, Apon's mistress Jane Mbura suffers miscarriage. Apon becomes defensive, nasty and irritable. He is totally unyielding to his wife, Seruya's pleas. He could spend a month or so away from home and when he at last turns up, he cannot not stand any questioning from Seruya. He grows inconsiderate, intolerable, hard and cruel. He beats her mercilessly over any small mistakes or slips and she too takes to fighting him back. They have ugly scenes. Between the years, Seruya too has grown hard and mean. This is where fire begets fire and Seruya does not take the beatings lying down. Di Meglio (2019) notes that many couples have had emotions of aggressively fighting physically in the heat of a quarrel.

In *Between the Years*, Seruya has begun a grand scheme of confronting Apon's cheating ways. She says that she hopes that one day Apon will not blame her for going out to find what she misses in that home, in spite of all the material comforts made available to her by Apon. She is denied attention and conjugal rights by Apon and has decided to hit back by scheming to renew her love life with Tim. During Mzee Musa's arbitration of the conflict between Apon and Seruya, Mzee feels disappointed in his daughter Seruya's complaints who in his opinion should bear all the blame and learn to suffer silently. This sort of disappointment is indeed ironical since it emanates from deep down the patriarchal society that Mzee Musa comes from. In the text this society believes in the warped masculine thinking that the woman is always wrong and the man is right. This kind of stereotype is what Seruya is resisting and this is the goal of gynocriticism. Xu affirms that gynocriticism is concerned with:

the 'internalized consciousness' of the female. The uncovering of the female subculture and exposition of a female model is the intention of gynocriticism, comprising recognition of a distinct female canon where a female identity is sought free from the masculine definitions and oppositions (Xu,2007, p.1)

The freedom sought for here is against the silences of the society that assumes when males are wrong and forgives them yet it cannot dare forgive a woman who happens to be on the wrong. Asenath Odaga through Seruya resists this stereotype of voicelessness and silence amidst the oppression of women and therefore this is what gynocriticism refers to as female identity.

All these are as a result of male machinations (patriarchy) that is deep seated in this society. It is strange that a woman has no support even from her own father and brother. She had committed a mortal sin by asserting herself, and seeking to have her rights and going as far as cheating on her husband. Seruya proves that indeed she is a radical feminist who upsets and subverts the patriarchal system that oppresses women and as one aim of radical feminism she evaluates and disintegrates the traditional gender roles as well as in public policies. Seruya as feminist ideally calls for a profound alteration of society in which male supremacy is abolished in all social and economic contexts.

Odaga pokes holes at the apparent inconsistency in society's treatment of infidelity. Patriarchy accepts infidelity for men but frowns on women. For men the society accepts double standards and readily forgives infidelity. Apon thus says:

“Don't you understand, Seruya,” Apon emphasized, “I'm a man. You're a woman and more is expected of you than of me. You are the custodian of all that is good in a family and society,” (Odaga,1987, p.169)

Rhode (2016) argues that the law on infidelity has a strange past governed by inconsistent use, class, racial, and gender discrimination. The inconsistency is clear and backed by legal opinions. Cheating wives are treated very crudely than their husbands and are expected to ignore their spouses' flaws.

In the analysis of *Endless Road* (1995), Bitá, Salmarie's maternal grandmother, physically beats a local missionary for estranging her and her people from their

traditions. This is all due to the fact that he denied them the right to carry out traditional funeral rites when Salmarie's father died. There was no weeping nor crying since her brother Kinda had been converted to Christianity. Bitu exacts her revenge on the Whiteman as a result of this atrocity and Salmarie says:

One day the local Missionary who was working with her son Kinda and who had been named as the source of this negation of such deeply rooted customs, came to pay a visit at home, Bitu quietly went where he was sitting and dealt him mighty blows one after another, with her walking stick! How could he have the audacity to come to her home to fish for her children and do more damage and destroy her father? The missionary had to flee on a horse back. (Odaga,1995, p.48)

Bitu upsets the patriarchal order by militantly sorting out her issues with the male supremacists like the white missionary man who has constantly trampled on her rights. Radical feminism in this quotation comes about since first of all in the colonial setting beating a white missionary was something unheard of and to make it worse beating a man for that case makes Bitu a radical feminist who does not care at all about the consequences.

Similarly, Ajienda, Salmarie's paternal grandmother, is said to have singlehandedly and alone fought and retrieved her goat from a leopard which had seized it in her house. Ordinarily in a patriarchal society it is a man's job to defend the family and its property but Ajienda goes against the grain and as a radical feminist she does not wait for men to rescue her livestock.

Salmarie engages Dino in a male-dominated political contest for a rural seat within the village to champion for women's rights and she says that her driving force for venturing into politics is because of under representation of women in parliament. This is against the wishes of Dino her husband. Through cutthroat competition she emerges the winner in a hotly contested political battle wrought with all manner of intimidations. During the

contest Dino, her husband, threatens to dispossess Salmarie of her house, but she invokes her constitutional rights that she is going to obtain a court injunction through a lawyer. Preece (2016) is of the opinion that radical feminists believe that rather than positioning persons as subject of competing forces, radical feminists are bound to adapt and negotiate, contest or subvert dominant hegemony of male dominated political contests. Indeed, Salmarie is a great student of this conviction and that is why she engages Dino in a political contest.

Political thuggery rears its ugly head in the contest between Salmarie and Dino and it really doesn't spare any decency. Dino hires goons and thugs with the sole mandate of humiliating Salmarie. She suspects these ulterior motives and beefs up her security by adding two women to her security team, one of them being her very own sister. Despite all these Salmarie is almost raped in failed attempt by security forces hired by Dino to kidnap her and she protests, thus,

Look. Let's not waste any more time on this issue. You sent your criminal friends to my house to kidnap and stop me from coming here this morning for the nomination. But, yes, I was smarter and here I am, with my papers in order and nomination done. Stop wasting more time (Odaga,1995, pg.112).

As a radical feminist Salmarie counters this patriarchal imposed violence by devising her own survival means. She swears that she wouldn't be alone, leave alone sharing a bedroom with Dino. Her sister, Karen, whom she came immediately after was going to be her full bodyguard whenever she was in or out of her house or at a meeting. Karen was a Karate teacher and a Japanese trained black belt holder and was also very good with a gun. She was a trained secret Interpol officer.

Whisnant (2009) defines rape as 'understood to involve sexual penetration of a person by force and/or without that person's consent. Rape is committed overwhelmingly by men and boys, usually against women and girls' (p.1). In this context the perpetrators of

rape in *Endless Road* are men and particularly security officers hired by Dino to offer him security during the campaigns. They all turn into goons who peddle fear and threats on helpless women especially Salmarie. One of them harboured ambitions of raping Salmarie. Radical feminists associate rape as a statement of patriarchal authority and not seduction for sex.

Salmarie who is only protected by a handful of relatives and a sister (Karen) is able to resist all attempts of rape from her aggressors. It is sad to note that her husband Dino is fully aware of the threats to her life and does nothing at all to offer support. This is the height of hypocrisy evident in the patriarchal society that Seruya comes from.

4.3.5. Education as Liberation Tool

Muriungi and Muriuki (2013) observe that education for women is the superior apparatus for total liberation. They aver that through education the modern day woman frees herself from the bondage of masculinity. The first tenet of gynocriticism identifies stereotypes that have led to various misconceptions about women. One such stereotype is illiteracy which is resisted when the female protagonists embrace education as a tool for confronting male dominance.

As a way of confronting patriarchy, Seruya in *Between the Years* joins Kenyatta University College to train as a teacher despite protestations from her father who strongly believes that she would be better off if she trains as a medical doctor. Jaoko Apon encourages her to study teaching:

If teaching is your choice, then you should go ahead and train as teacher. You should not allow your father to force you into going against your wishes,” he emphasised. “This I have always felt is one of the mistakes parents make when they refuse to allow their children a free choice (Odaga 1987, p.20).

The fallacy that a woman cannot stand alone and succeed is deconstructed by Maritha, Seruya's mother, who believes that with Seruya's education and her background in teaching she will be able to withstand any marital fallout should she be abandoned by Apon, she says thus:

.... Satan, brother,"Maritha interrupted her husband, "don't indulge in self-pity. People are free to talk and say whatever they wish. Seruya is better off than many young women of her age group. She'd be capable of standing on her own should the marriage fall apart as they seem to do these days. Martha spoke in earnest, trying to comfort her husband (Odaga,1987, p.148).

In *Endless Road*, Salmarie, the main protagonist, embraces education fully as a weapon for fighting patriarchal dominance, ignorance and poverty. In the text Salmarie is jilted by her first love, Kabita, who ditches her simply because she has been awarded a scholarship by Kosieko Sugar Factory and is going for post graduate studies in sugar technology while he was ready for marriage. She observes that:

Kabita had jilted me because he had found a bird in hand worth two in the bush! But the truth was that he ditched me because I had been awarded a scholarship by Kosieko Sugar Factory and was going for post graduate studies in sugar technology while he was ready for marriage. He acted spitefully and said he couldn't wait for me as the world was full of marriageable women (Odaga,1995, p.10)

White (2013) reacts to this from the point of view of envious men who never appreciate the lady they're engaged to, and for whom this feeling of deficiency is likely to increase when the woman enjoys further feat. Xu further observes that gynocriticism was a reaction to Freudian psychology and that it:

challenged a Freudian psychoanalytic perspective whereby the female inherently suffers envy of men and feelings of inadequacy and injustice, combined with feelings of intellectual inferiority (Xu,2007, p.4)

Kabita really grows jealous and envious of Salmarie's achievements and ideally Salmarie uses her educational prowess to defeat intellectual inferiority from patriarchy in this instance. She upsets the status quo of the society where it is known that it is only

male who are intelligent. This results into the premature collapse of their love affair with Kabita who cannot stand an educated woman.

Salmarie returns home after a long sojourn abroad in Sweden having joined her husband there. She arms herself with mobilization skills and involves herself with several women groups at home and in their district as a whole. She begins to make roofing tiles and two of the women groups under her patronage also begin to make toilet papers. Men and women came to know and to appreciate the work they do together and they develop a relationship of mutual cooperation and understanding. It takes them three years to establish themselves properly and for the impact of her work with the women to be felt.

The stereotype of ignorance amongst the women fraternity is resisted through gynocriticism and deconstruction. It is a misconception in the two texts that women are ignorant and not educated enough to surmount the challenges emanating from the deep patriarchal society. Seruya defeats this thinking by studying at the university and she becomes a teacher in *Between the Years* while Salmarie studies sugar technology abroad in *Endless Road* and she uses this to liberate women at the grassroots level.

The traditional societies from where the lead female characters in the text come from have always valued education for the male child at the expense of the girl child and this is what Seruya and Salmarie are trying to debunk that only boy child must benefit from education. Investment in girl child education bears fruits since it is the entire community that becomes educated. The author Asenath Odaga drives this point home and has succeeded in advancing the success stories of the lead female characters who have surmounted the challenge of ignorance.

4.3.6. Family Re-union: Reconciliations and Reflections

Reading through the two novels one gets a vivid description of families whose well-knit social fabrics have been destabilized as a result of male engineered crises ranging from infidelity, chauvinism, political contests and other issues. Consequently, the family has suffered as a unit due to these problems. Strange enough these issues are because of male stereotyping of women and it is the main female characters who initiate reconciliation so that there is harmony in the family, hence this is resistance to male oppression. The theory of gynocriticism through the second tenet identifies thematic concerns that promote women's agenda. While analyzing the two texts we realize that reconciliation is key to family survival and resistance to masculine stereotypes does not imply the death of the family. The women in the text wish that all differences are resolved.

Rovers (2019) opines that family re-union is achievable and can result in happiness, rejuvenation, inspiration and a sense of belonging. A lot of emotional attachment and enthusiasm from the partners is needed. The pain might be too huge: however, the path to reconciliation leads to a fresh start.

In *Between the Years*, Seruya runs away to her parents' home due to irreconcilable differences with Apon. She goes with all the children. Seruya laments the affair between Apon and Jane. She is dismayed that the society accepts his double standards and readily forgives his infidelity. She even regrets and says that she should have married Tim instead. Apon sarcastically says that as a man he is free to do what he wishes. It is against this backdrop that Seruya writes him a letter:

Dear Jaoko,

I have gone to my parents with the children as I realize we cannot make it. In other words, I have complied with your directive and have made the only move advisable when people have reached the end of the road as we seem to have done.

Apisi (Odaga,1987, p.175).

Seruya resists Apon's infidelity by running away to her parents' home. This action hits Apon very hard. The family's fortunes are shattered by this act. When asked by her mother why she has taken the drastic action, Seruya says that Apon provides for Jane's needs materially and otherwise. Seruya wonders why men are allowed to live double lives. All these is attributed to patriarchal chauvinism. After thorough reflection and having survived an accident Apon sobers up and goes to Seruya's home to seek for forgiveness, thus:

I realize I haven't been a good son-in-law to you and neither have I been a very good husband and companion to your daughter. And I beg you all to forgive me and give me a chance to make up for the hard time I've given your daughter. (Odaga,1987, p.194)

Apon's loneliness after Seruya leaves for her home forces him to humble himself before his in-laws. Her father, Mzee Musa, pleads with her to change her mind, forget about everything and reconcile with her husband for the sake of family unity. Seruya obeys without uttering another word because the patriarchal society has ingrained it in her mind to be obedient to the man. She goes to pack her things and those of her children.

Reconciliation in this family is restored. Nakamura (1999) observes:

...especially most interesting among them is the fact that Seruya's efforts to get him back to his sense is the key to Apon's last salvation. Her heart-rending efforts give some impact on Apon's conscience without his awareness and he starts reflecting upon his life and gets closer to the upcoming redemption. (Nakamura,1999, p.46)

Nakamura buttresses the idea that the woman, Seruya, is the savior of Apon's dwindling fortunes in marriage, business and trade, employment and his general well-being.

Truly Apon's life previously has taken a serious beating ranging from stumbling upon a scene of his mistress Jane who cheats on him with his trade partner Dr. Jones, surviving an accident, unending court-battles due to his involvement in illegal wild game trophy smuggling syndicate and the most traumatizing is when Seruya cheats on him with Tim, her lover-boyfriend and her eventual separation from him. All these catastrophes make Apon to come through his senses.

In *Endless Road*, Dino insists that Salmarie's political ambition will destroy their family. Indeed, the unity of the family is under threat since the children are torn apart in supporting Dino's and Salmarie's political ambitions. The matter is further complicated by Salmarie's brother who also offers his candidature for political contest in Palm City. This act irks Dino and he feels Salmarie's family is greedy. He accuses her entire family of aspiring for dominion over others. The couple constantly reads from different scripts because apart from wanting to assist the community at large the heat generated by Salmarie's and Dino's political contests divides the family in the middle,

My children were still divided on the issue of my getting into politics. My two daughters the twins disagreed: one was for me and the other against my intentions. My youngest son felt I was embarrassing their dad while my two eldest sons equivocally supported me. They argued that I was free to do what I liked with my time and that I should be left alone to contest and win the seat as I was fit and capable. There were two against me and three for me (Odaga,1995, p.118).

This quote emphasizes on the disunity in the family as a result of the political contest between Dino and Salmarie. The political tension that ensues is so bad that Dino calls Salmarie names and brands her a prostitute with no family, husband and no proper background. He dwells on personality and makes sure that he assassinated her character so much that she almost gave up. Salmarie goes ahead and wins the political contest. The fallout resulting is so immense and humbling for Dino.

The children are worried on the toll it has taken on their parents and therefore call for reconciliation starting from Salmarie herself,

I want to talk to him. True love forgives and bears no grudges. I don't wish to play in the hands of our adversaries who'd be happy to see our family apart due to politics. (Odaga,1995, p.126)

Salmarie and Dino come together and iron their differences. They promise not to hold any grudges amongst them. Their love story grows in leaps and bounds. As a sign of moving on with the results of the elections, Dino holds her hands and looked into her eyes reassuring her of the precious love and friendship that they almost lost. They walked to where their three children were sitting. They hugged and held each other in that spirit of togetherness which bound them as one family.

The fore goings exposed in the two texts all point to reconciliation. The irreconcilable differences between the protagonists point out that feminists and chauvinists must learn to coexist together and this forms the basis of our study, that we are not dislodging men but we seek to find out a working relationship for peaceful co-existence. Salmarie and Seruya understand that forgiveness only allows Dino and Jaoko the only sanctuary where their generations can survive. These two families learn that the animosities between them must be thwarted at all costs.

The late realization therefore forces the two families to embrace reconciliation amidst the dwindling fortunes of the families. The communities around them come together for the noble mission. Asenath Odaga builds on the theme of reconciliation as the two novels end on reconciliatory notes. She envisions a society where the female gender is treated with respect and dignity only when equality is driven through the conscience of the patriarchal society. The author bridges the gap between the female and the male differences that prevents them from achieving the goal of unity. Our study bridges the

unity of purpose between the two genders, there can be unity. Whiting and Schulze note that other gynocritics such as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar observe that gynocriticism remains vigilant:

to gender-essentialist notions of male and female behaviour and, in its insistence on a common bond among literary sisters, elites or ignores important differences between authors, particularly those of race, class, ethnicity, and sexuality (Whiting and Schulze, 1995, p.6).

The goal of gynocriticism as we have seen in these texts is to deflate the stereotypes, misconceptions and mistrust that have always been bandied around by the patriarchal society from which our female characters come from in the two texts. Through gynocriticism and especially the second tenet that promotes feminist themes, the author has devised reconciliation as a key ingredient of bridging the gap between the feminist and the chauvinist agenda. The texts show that when the protagonists and the villains reconcile then what follows is a peaceful development agenda. The victory in Salmarie's political contest with Dino is only enjoyable when the family forgets about the pain and divisions it has undergone through in *Endless Road* while Apon can only enjoy tranquility with his wife and children when he changes from his philandering ways and begs for forgiveness from the wife and the in laws in *Between the Years*.

The idea behind the study as a result of gynocriticism borrowed from the female phase is that the female identity achieves to operate in a free space stripped of patriarchal designations and standpoints. All along Asenath Odaga has portrayed female characters who have rebelled against male standards.

4.3.7. Conclusion

This subsection has examined the presence of politics that has been found to be a principal thematic concern. It has been shown how the woman character fights off male

stereotype and opposes prejudice from the male dominated political scene in order to foster women representation in politics. The issue of heteronormative love affairs has also been discussed to show how love and intimacy has been construed to oppress the female person. However, the women have turned their traumatic love experiences to their advantage and excelled in love life ultimately. The issue of women as radical feminists has also been discussed. They revenge and retaliate against all injustices from masculine stereotypes engendered by males. Education as a liberating tool has also been discussed since the main protagonists receive education and further knowledge which has shaped greatly their fight against patriarchy. Family re-union is also expounded since the two main families in the novels studied have suffered from disunity as result of male chauvinism. They reconcile for prosperity.

Chapter four generally has employed the theoretical framework of gynocriticism in analyzing how resistance to masculine stereotypes, literary style used by female characters for resistance against masculine stereotypes and the thematic concerns emanating from female characters' resistance to masculine stereotypes. Gynocriticism establishes an equilibrium in the analysis of the two texts by Asenath Odaga. The equilibrium envisaged in the two texts under study places a society that is devoid of all manner of unnecessary gender based discrimination, stereotyping and fallacious misconceptions. Our study pinpoints that the lead characters, Seruya and Salmarie have been able to surmount the misogynistic tendencies that are propagated by patriarchy.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0. Introduction

This chapter summarizes the findings drawn from the entire thesis, offers general conclusions of the study and consequently gives recommendations for further studies.

5.1. Summary of Findings

All through Asenath Odaga's novels discussed in this study, we have established the presence of gender stereotypes against women, as advanced by male characters. Virtually all the male characters in the two novels have been seen to view women with contempt and scornful attitude, relegating the female characters to lesser humans and pushing them to the periphery of the society. The men see no meaningful role of women in the society and only view them as objects to satisfy the male ego; cook for men, remain as housewives, observe high obedience and allegiance to men and not compete with men.

The study similarly has moved further and shown how female characters circumvent the stereotypes by having an emboldened stance against male dominance. The female characters have had to contend with strong resilience and determination to fight off their space in a masculine society where women's voice is largely muted. To have their voices heard, the women characters have had to go through a tumultuous journey and giving up is never an option for them. Odaga chooses Salmarie as the lead protagonist in *Endless Road* while Seruya is at the epicentre of women emancipation in *Between the Years*.

Salmarie fights a protracted battle with the society, patriarchy, her husband and male dominance. Though she triumphs at the end, it is not without bruises that she wins the war against gender stereotypes. The men view her as the enemy number one of patriarchy and social order in the society.

In her determination to disrupt the order of things, she has altercations beginning from her home where she defies her own husband and joins active politics. She vies for a parliamentary seat and becomes the first woman to challenge male dominance in the political scene. In this way, she breaks norms, shocking both men and women. While women celebrate her bravery, men see her as a cultural rebel who has done an unthought-of act.

Salmarie is therefore at constant loggerheads with the male characters and the patriarchal society because of leaning towards a new era of gender equality. Her fight for women emancipation has put her at a higher ground and Odaga uses her to squash the gender stereotypes in the society in a bid to advance gender equilibrium and create harmony between two genders that have previously been characterized by acrimonious relationships. It is therefore by literary design that Odaga depicts women characters, and more especially, Salmarie as successful at the end, denoting the triumph of the female gender against gender stereotypes.

Seruya on the other hand in Odaga's *Between the Years* is a replica of Salmarie. She fights her own battles against patriarchy, especially the cultural aspect and just as Salmarie, she emerges victorious at the end. The epitome of Seruya's battle is centered on her family. She firstly defies her father who wants to choose a medical career for her and makes her own independent choice to become a teacher. This surprising defiance of daughter against her father is the genesis of the sprouting of a courageous and

determined woman who clearly wants to set out her own independent world and consequently free the woman person who has for a long while lived under trappings of patriarchy and masculinity.

Secondly, while in her marriage, Seruya wears out of patience of her masculine and philandering husband. Her decision to leave the marriage, though temporarily, intimates to her boldness to break from masculine chains that oppress the woman person. She does not choose to remain in a strenuous relationship in order to please the society or men for that matter, but rather defies the chains of marital bliss that are oppressive to the woman. Seruya is thus feminist to the core and is willing to raise her own children without the support of a man, dismantling the stereotype that women cannot be bread winners in their families.

5.2. Conclusions

The research analyzed the three objectives of the study which guided the direction of the research. The first objective illustrated the presence of masculine stereotypes directed towards the female characters. In this objective, the female body as an avenue for male gratification was discussed. The female person was objectified and used, for instance, as a sexual toy. Virginities of both Salmarie and Seruya in the two texts was found to be very crucial to the male ego. Their husbands delighted at finding their women virgins and took great pride in breaking the virginities. The men's virginity is not discussed in the two texts implying that female virginity is an avenue to satisfying the male person as depicted in Odaga's fiction. Sex is also used by men such as Dino and Apon to conquer the woman. Patriarchy and otherization of the woman also pointed to the projection of masculinities towards the woman.

The second objective examined the literary aesthetics present in the two novels in relation to femininity. Song as a style is used by Salmarie in *Endless Road* to project her inner feelings of love and intimacy. More especially, she uses the song to silence critics who are against her choice to marry Dino. In the song, she makes her feminine independence known by declaring that a woman can make decisions too. Metaphorical analysis in this objective also examined issues of male sexuality and sexual intercourse as a way of subduing the woman. Flashback on its part helped recollect past experiences and events in the two texts that portrayed the strength of the woman in his quest for freedom and emancipation.

The third objective discussed analyzed the place of the woman through the lenses of various themes as depicted in the texts. The political scene is largely male-dominated but women like Salmarie in *Endless Road* permeated the political space to get a share on her own behalf and on behalf of women. She overcomes all masculine stereotypes and beats all masculine traps to emerge victorious in the hotly contested parliamentary elections. Her political triumph is proof enough of the subverted discourse that only man can attain leadership roles. Salmarie is thus the epitome of the feminist brand that has sought to voice the shuttered dreams and aspirations of the many women in her society. She ends the political oppression meted against the women by creating leadership role for the female character. Salmarie is an unstoppable political force that silences the stereotype that women belong to the kitchen space and other peripheral roles in the society.

In this objective also, the dynamics of heteronormative love also emerged. At the centre of the love spectacle is Salmarie and Dino in *Endless Road* and Seruya and Apon in *Between the Years*. The two women begin their love journey with caution and great

skepticism. Salmarie is cautious of Dino because she has severally been hurt by men who seemed to come to the love zone only for their selfish gains such as sexual gratification. Though she finally falls in deep love and gets married to Dino, she is ready to quit her marriage when masculinity gets to an elastic limit. In the course of their marriage, Salmarie threatens to end the marital bliss with Dino when conflicts are aggravated.

Seruya on the other hand, though in love with Apon is also cautious. She eventually gets married and the tumultuous marital journey brings out her feminist being.

The woman as a radical feminist is also discussed in this objective. It comes out clearly that the woman often when pushed to the periphery by masculine stereotype does not stay in a laid back position but resorts to combative mechanisms of dismantling patriarchy.

Education as a liberating tool has also been analyzed in this objective and it happens that the female liberators are actually empowered by their level of training. Seruya in *Between the Years* is a trained teacher and therefore enlightened. She can stand on her own and not necessarily depend on Apon for survival. Salmarie has studied sugar technology abroad and has also gained knowledge on women mobilization.

Family re-union as theme has also been explained in detail since the two main families for the protagonists in the two novels suffer as a result of male chauvinism and it is reconciliation that heals them.

5.3. Recommendations

1.The study recommends that the responsible authorities should endeavour to establish strong gender policy formulation and mainstreaming in all the sectors of our society in

view of resistance to masculine stereotypes. This will in the long run ensure peaceful coexistence between women and men.

2.The study also recommends that medical reproductive aspects like infertility that are normally labelled on women by the patriarchal society ought to be treated cautiously with the involvement of entire couples to provide logical solutions.

3.The study further recommends that the legal framework should be faithfully followed by legal and enforcement agencies in dealing with gender based violence since this will go a long way of inculcating gender and human rights. Women as well as men have suffered from this vice. Feminist ideology is a quest for humane relations.

5.4. Suggestions for Further Research.

1.This study suggests that future studies on *Endless Road* and *Between the Years* may focus on an analysis of male characters who promote feminist ideologies. This would be an opportune occasion to research on feminist male characters engendered in the texts. Apon, in *Between the Years*, supports Seruya's choice of education contrary to her father's will while Dino, in *Endless Road*, supports his wife's reconciliation efforts at the end.

2.The study also suggests that studies be made on the influence of foreign culture and the tradition of the journey –motif on the male characters' treatment of gender equality and relationships. Apon and Dino, in *Between the Years* and *Endless Road* respectively, have all travelled to and spent several years in Europe and have been bestowed with the best form of education that favours the liberation of women. However, the way they treat their wives when in Africa is very despicable.

3. The study further suggests that studies can also be done on the role of female characters acting as victimizers of other females in the achievement of resistance to masculine stereotypes in Odaga's selected novels under study. In *Between the Years* Jane Mbura is Seruya's love rival and Apon's clandestine woman. Jane Mbura almost behaves like a femme fatale who disappoints him and almost makes him lose his life. She is a villain and she works for her downfall. The thread is also evident in women characters in *Endless Road* who constantly pester Salmarie to find out whether she is pregnant or not just to prove that she is in a failing relationship. Women should not be seen as their own enemies in the quest for freedom in a patriarchal setting.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

Objectives	<i>Between the Years</i>	<i>Endless Road</i>
1.Masculine Stereotypes Depicting Female Characters	(a.) Female Body as an Avenue for Male Gratification: Pages- 15,16,17&144 (b) Patriarchy and Otherization:Pages- 20&143	(a)Female Body as an Avenue for Male Gratification: Pages- 66,70&84 (b) Patriarchy and Otherization:Pages- 5,7,13.42,45,47,60&79
2.Literary Styles Depicting Female Characters' Resistance to Masculine Stereotyping	(a) Song and Woman: Pages-24 (b)Metaphorical Synthesis: Pages-119 (c) Flashback as a Narrative Style: Pages- 109&110	(a)Song and Woman— (b)Metaphorical Synthesis: Pages- 20,21&101 (c) Flashback as a Narrative Style: Pages- 36,37,49,64&65
3.Thematic Concerns in Female Characters Resistance to Masculine Stereotypes.	(a) Politics, Masculinity& the Woman: Pages-109 (b) Heartaches: Dynamics of Love: Pages-110 (c) The Woman as a Radical Feminist: Pages- 169 (d) Education as Liberation Tool: Pages- 20&148 (e) Family Re-union: Reconciliations &Reflections:Pages- 175&194	(a) Politics, Masculinity & the Woman: Pages- 80,85,87,88,132,136&138 (b) Heartaches: Dynamics of Love: Pages-10,17&19 (c) The Woman as a Radical Feminist: Pages- 48&112 (d) Education as Liberation Tool: Pages-10 (e) Family Re-Union: Reconciliations & Reflections:Pages- 118&126

APPENDIX 2: RONGO UNIVERSITY LETTER OF INTRODUCTION



OFFICE OF THE DEAN
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Tel. 0771349741

P.O. Box 103 - 40404
RONGO

Our Ref: **MLIT/1014/2014**

Date: Monday, February 11, 2019

The Chief Executive Officer,
National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation,
off Waiyaki Way, Upper Kabete,
P.O Box 30623-00100,
Nairobi-KENYA

Dear Sir,

RE: RESEARCH PERMIT FOR MR. SIGERA MOSES OKEA-MLIT/1014/2014

We wish to inform you that the above person is a bona fide graduate student of Rongo University in the School of Arts and Social Sciences pursuing a Master of Arts degree in Literature. He has been authorized by the University to undertake research titled; "***Female Characters' Resistance to Masculine Stereotypes in Asenath Odaga's Selected Novels***".

This is, therefore, to request the commission to issue him with a research permit to enable him proceed for field work.

Your assistance to him shall be highly appreciated.

Thank you.

Dr. Edward Anino

Ag. DEAN, SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Copy to: Vice Chancellor

Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic and Student Affairs).

Dean, School of Arts and Social Sciences

HoD, Languages, Linguistics and Literature



APPENDIX 4: NACOSTI RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION



NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Telephone: +254-20-2213471,
2241349, 2210571, 2219420
Fax: +254-20-318245, 318249
Email: dg@nacosti.go.ke
Website: www.nacosti.go.ke
When replying please quote

9th Floor, Utali House
Uhuru Highway
P.O. Box 30623-00100
NAIROBI-KENYA

Ref. No. **NACOSTI/P/19/65864/28597**

Date: **12th March, 2019**

Sigera Moses Okea
Rongo University
103-40404
RONGO.

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on '*Female characters' resistance to masculine stereotypes in Asenath Odaga's selected novels.*' I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in **Kericho County** for the period ending **12th March, 2020.**

You are advised to report to **the County Commissioner and the County Director of Education, Kericho County** before embarking on the research project.

Kindly note that, as an applicant who has been licensed under the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 to conduct research in Kenya, you shall deposit a **copy** of the final research report to the Commission within **one year** of completion. The soft copy of the same should be submitted through the Online Research Information System.

GODFREY P. KALERWA MSc., MBA, MKIM
FOR: DIRECTOR-GENERAL/CEO

Copy to:

The County Commissioner
Kericho County.

The County Director of Education
Kericho County.

APPENDIX 5: MINISTRY OF EDUCATION RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EARLY LEARNING AND BASIC EDUCATION

EMSSD:EDUCATION@kenya.gov.ke
When Replying Please Quote:

County Education Office
P.O BOX 149
KERICHO

REF: KER/C/ED/GC/2/VOLII/

18TH MARCH, 2019.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN,

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION,
SIGERA MOSES OKEA,

The above student has been authorized by National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation to undertake research on *'Female characters' resistance to masculine stereotypes in Asenath Odaga's selected novels* for a period ending 12th March, 2020.

Kindly accord him the necessary assistance.


BY
ZACHARY MUTURI
COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
KERICHO COUNTY.



APPENDIX 6: KERICHO COUNTY RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND CO-ORDINATION OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Telegrams:
Telephone: Kericho 20132
When replying please quote
kerichocc@yahoo.com

THE COUNTY COMMISSIONER
KERICHO COUNTY
P.O. BOX 19
KERICHO

REF: MISC.19 VOL.III/181

18th March , 2019

Sigera Moses Okea
Rongo University
P.O.Box 103-40404
RONGO

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORISATION

I am pleased to inform you that you are authorized to undertake research in Kericho County as per the letter Ref. No. NACOSTI/P/19/65864/28597 dated 12th March, 2018 on ***"Female characters' resistance to masculine stereotypes in Asenath Odaga's selected novels"*** for a period ending 12th March, 2020.

Any assistance accorded to him is highly appreciated.



Ezekiel Amonde
FOR: COUNTY COMMISSIONER
KERICHO COUNTY

CC: County Director of Education
KERICHO COUNTY