COURSE GUIDE

ENG 419
AFRICAN LITERATURE AND GENDER

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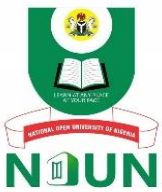

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CONTENT

INTRODUCTION

ENG419 – AFRICAN LITERATURE AND GENDER

ENG419 is a one-semester course of two credit units. The course has sixteen units which cover important topics in African literature and genders such as African culture and literature, African drama in French and English, written indigenous poetry, African poetry in English, African literature in Portuguese, gender and gender theories, theories of African literature, the concerns of feminism, feminism and the African experience, feminist literary studies, as well as women in the African literary genre. The course aims to broaden your previous knowledge of African Literature and gender; it is actually two broad subjects in one, compressed into relevant aspects you need to have a good grasp of.

This course suggests a list of books you can read to give you a better understanding of the title. There are also a number of Tutor-Marked Assignments (TMAs) which will not only test your understanding of the course, but are essential to your passing the course.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN IN THIS COURSE

The study has four modules which discuss vital issues on African literature and gender. For instance, Module One discusses African literature and her culture; Module Two is on African fiction written in English; Module Three treats the feminism discourse in Africa and her fiction, and its origin; concerns of feminists, feminist literary studies, feminist theories, and feminism and the African experience; while Module Four looks at feminism in African fiction, gender, and the different theories there are. Generally, at the end of this Course Material, you should have a better understanding of African Literature and its writers, and a background knowledge of feminism, gender, and the place of the African woman in these concepts.

COURSE AIMS

The course is designed to take you through a survey of African Literature and the subject of gender. Some of the issues that will be looked at include how Africans view gender, and in what way(s) gender has influenced African literature. Some of its aims are to:

- Improve your knowledge of African Literature;
- Acquaint you with the theme of gender in African Literature;
- Introduce to you the ideology of feminism;
- Discuss feminism and the African experience;
- Explain feminist theories;

- Differentiate between feminism and gender;
- Update your knowledge of African literary transitions and phases.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

At the end of the course, you should be able to:

- define African Literature;
- discuss the background to African culture;
- review the concerns of Western and African feminists;
- attempt a critical discussion of the theories of gender;
- explain feminism and the African literary experience.

WORKING THROUGH THE COURSE

There are sixteen units in this course. Study the contents of each unit before you attempt each question. You should also pay attention to the objectives of each study unit to guide you through the unit. We advise you make some relevant notes as you read through this course material. You will be assessed through Tutor-Marked Assignments and an examination at the end of the semester. The time of the examination will be communicated to you.

COURSE MATERIALS

The major components of the course are:

Course Guide
Study Units
Textbooks
Assignment Files
Presentation Schedule

STUDY UNITS

ENG419 is a 2-credit unit 400 level course for undergraduate students. There are four modules of four units each, making a total of sixteen units. The four modules of the course are as follows:

Module 1 African Literature and Culture

Unit 1 African Literature and Its Phases

Unit 2 Phases of African Poetry in English (I)
Unit 3 Phases of African Poetry in English (II)
Unit 4 Phases of African Poetry in English (III)

Module 2 Black Voices as African Literature

Unit 1 African Fiction in English (I)
Unit 2 African Fiction in English (II)
Unit 3 African Literature in Portuguese
Unit 4 African Drama in French English

Module 3 History and Feminism

Unit 1 Historical Overview of Feminism
Unit 2 Feminist Expressions
Unit 3 Feminism and the African Experience (I)
Unit 4 Feminism and the African Experience (II)

Module 4 Women, Gender, and the Feminist Question

Unit 1 Women at the Centre in Selected African Fiction
Unit 2 Major Western Feminist Theorists (I)
Unit 3 Major Western Feminist Theorists (II)
Unit 4 Gender and Gender Theories

TEXTBOOKS AND REFERENCES

At the end of each unit, there is a list of relevant reference materials to complement your study of this course. However, this list is not exhaustive; as final year students, we encourage you to read other critical materials which will give you a good grasp of this course.

ASSESSMENT

Two types of assessments are provided in the course: the Self-Assessment Exercises (SAE) and the Tutor-Marked Assignments (TMA). You will not submit your SAE, but they are important to enable you do a self-assessment of how much you really understand what you have read. You are expected to submit your TMA for marking, as it will make up to 30% of your total score.

EXAMINATION AND GRADING

The Examination for ENG419 will be two hours and carry 70% total course grade. The examination will test your knowledge and understanding of the contents of this course material.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED FOR THIS COURSE

You will need a can-do attitude, a willingness to learn, and an ability to read outside the contents in this course material.

COURSE OVERVIEW

Unit	Title of work	Week's Activity	Assessment (end of unit)
	Module 1 African Literature and Culture		
1	African Literature and Culture	1	Assignment 1
2	Phases of African Poetry in English (I)	2	Assignment 2
3	Phases of African Poetry in English (II)	3	Assignment 3
4	Phases of African Poetry in English (III)	4	Assignment 4
	Module 2 Black Voices as African Literature		
1	Black Voices as African Literature	5	Assignment 5
2	African Fiction in English (I)	6	Assignment 6
3	African Fiction in English (II)	7	Assignment 7
4	African Literature in Portuguese	8	Assignment 8
	Module 3 History and Feminism		
1	African Drama in French and English	9	Assignment 9
2	Feminism and the African Female Writer	10	Assignment 10
3	Historical Overview of Feminism	11	Assignment 11
4	Feminist Expressions	12	Assignment 12
	Module 4 Women, Gender, and the Feminist Question		
1	Women at the Centre in Selected African Fiction	13	Assignment 13
2	Major Western Feminist Theorists (I)	14	Assignment 14
3	Major Western Feminist Theorists (II)	15	Assignment 15
4	Gender and Gender Theories	16	Assignment 16

FACILITATORS/TUTORS AND TUTORIALS

There are (19) hours of tutorials provided for this course. You will be notified of the dates and time for the online facilitation of these courses and the contact phone number of your tutor. We advise you take an active part in these classes and the activities therein.

SUMMARY/CONCLUSION

This is a course that is broad, interesting, and includes all the genres of literature, the relevant developmental periods in Africa, African writing on gender, and feminist theoretical perspectives.

Your success in the course depends on how much effort, time, and planning you put in studying the course. Here is wishing you all the best.

MAIN COURSE

CONTENTS

MODULE 1 AFRICAN LITERATURE AND CULTURE

UNIT 1 AFRICAN LITERATURE AND ITS PHASES

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit, we attempt some definitions of the term, 'African Literature'. We also discuss the characteristics and different phases of African literature from the 1900 to present. Below are the Learning Outcomes of this unit:

2.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- define African Literature, and discuss its origin

- identify the characteristics of African Literature
- state the features of the phases of African Literature
- compare the phases of African Literature
- outline the main concerns of the pioneer African poets.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 What Is African Literature?

It may be impossible to give a satisfactory definition of African Literature. However, African Literature refers to those works which are written by African writers including those in the Diaspora to depict social-cultural, moral and political values of the continent. In the process, African writers had to use the language of the colonisers, an experience which has been objected to by many critics and writers of African descent. It is on the basis of this that a number of African writers have returned to the use of their own dialects first, before translating into foreign languages like English, French, Portuguese, or any other inherited colonial language.

African Literature refers to the experiences of African writers who, through their literary works, express dissatisfaction or anger over the dislocation of African society, and their efforts to correct the dislocation.

African Literature includes literary works of Africans originating from Africa, or of Africans based outside the continent. Thus, works from North Africa, South Africa, East and West Africa are included in most studies of African Literature. Most countries from Africa share the burden of colonial ideology and issues that surround crises of cultural identity. In post-colonial African culture, African nations still struggle with the problem of neo-colonialism, ethnicity and the quest to have an identity of their own in the international arena. African Literature can be broadly categorised into three phases from 1900 to 1940.

3.1.1 The First Phase of African Literature (1900 – 1940)

Considering the significance of the oral genre to modern African Literature, it will be incorrect to say African Literature began in the 20th century. In the early part of the twentieth century, Africa was exposed to Western education. Many African writers of the 20th century who returned to their countries after their studies abroad to produce literary works have been praised for their thematic concerns and issues. Their works have been categorised as the beginning of African Literature. Examples of such works are those written by Gladys May Casely

Hayford and Thomas Mafolo. The latter wrote *The Traveller of the East* (1934), Chaka (1925) and *Pitseng* (1910). His first novel was written in his native Sesuto language, though later translated into the English language.

3.1.2 The Second Phase of African Literature (1940-1960)

The second phase of African Literature is from 1945 to the independence era in 1960. The period was characterised by political agitations for most of sub-Saharan Africa. Literary activity in the period was intense. The period also witnessed literary protests against cultural imperialism. From the 1800s to the 1920s, European writers assumed the mouthpiece of African writers, leaning on their experiences as colonial masters and administrators to strengthen and popularise erroneous images of African people. This second phase pushed forward writers like Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Aime Cessaire, Tchicanya Utamsi, Mongo Beti, to mention a few, who used their works to try to reverse the negative image of Africa presented in 'classical' novels like Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Many of the African writers of the second phase relied on aspects of oral tradition, literature and culture as literary tools to challenge ridiculous Eurocentric portrayals of Africa. The writers, for instance, present characters who struggle to adapt to a way of life that is highly individualised, as against a culture that they were used to – a collective people-oriented lifestyle which catered for the overall good of all. It is this changing society that is captured in the creative works of African writers like Leopold Sedar Senghor, Aime Cesaire, Leo Gotran Damas, David Diop and Birago Diop, who adopt the African philosophy, Negritude, to protest colonial exploitation and denigration of African culture and ideology. The Senegalese poet and writer, Leopold Sedar Senghor, defined Negritude as "the sum total of civilised values of the black world." African writers of the period present an African identity to the world, totally contrary to the pitiable image of Africa across Europe back then.

Literature reflects the social and political experiences of a particular time and place. For example, in 1948, the Apartheid regime of South Africa imposed all forms of restrictions on South African writers and non-writers. Most black authors could not publish their works, as they had no access to publishing houses. Only Afrikaner writers that were pro-apartheid or subtle apologists got their works published. South African writers like Nardine Gordimer, Dorris Lessing, Athol Fugard, J. M. Coetize, and Alan Paton produced what became known as South African plays. Some black South African writers like Es'kia Mphalele, Peter Abrahams, Alex La Guma, Bessie Head and Dennis Brutus wrote

from exile, projecting the theme of apartheid in their works. Other writers whose ideas ran contrary to the philosophy of Apartheid were subtle and 'selective' in the themes of their creative works.

However, language occupies a central place in the attempt to create an identity for African Literature. This is because most of the literatures from the region are written in English, French and Portuguese and based on the fact that most African countries are inheritors of a tradition that is foreign or alien to the people. And, by virtue of history, political and geographical experiences, the literature that emerged from the ashes of the language contact and experience wear a distinct coloration termed African Literature.

3.1.3 The Third Phase of African Literature (1960-Present)

The response to the language dilemma has been taken seriously during the third and current phase of the development of African Literature. Ngugi wa Thiong'o is a good and practical example of the language exponent and issue. He wrote his work, *I Will Marry When I Want*, first in his native Kikuyu tongue and later translated to the English language. This is in line with the belief that for Africans to claim to be in possession of literature, it must be written in a language that is theirs. However, some schools of thought have challenged this view because of the multilingual nature of many countries in Africa. For instance, in Nigeria alone, there are over 450 languages, most of which are mutually shared. It becomes difficult to limit the publication of creative works to a particular or one's mother tongue. To avoid a form of 'literary babel', it becomes imperative for the language of the colonial masters to be used in the expression of African Literature.

3.1.4 Relativities and Regional Differences in African Cultures

The concept of Africa in the imagination of the West is coloured with distortion, degradation, blackmail and denial. Africa was believed to be located in an irrelevant and hidden part of the globe that was covered with 'darkness'. The continent was also said to be populated by barbarous blacks who had no history or religion. However, during the 1950s and the 1960s, African writers became the 'light' that dissipated the ignorance and 'darkness' that Africa and Africans were related with. The creative task of such writers was to exhibit the culture and tradition, as well as the politics, customs, and history of the continent and its people. Their writings contributed significantly to the quest for independence during the pre-independence era in many African countries.

Many indigenous writings of Africa in the twentieth century were preoccupied with political themes and issues. African poets relied on the use of imagery, local expressions, and figures of speech drawn from the rich African orature. However, the African writer was in a dilemma on the language of expression to use I writing – the colonial language or his or her language? There was also the issue of translation of the rich repertoire of African oral literature into English/French/Portuguese. This brings to the fore the issue of language as cultural accumulation and historical transmission. Many African writers respond to the issue of colonialism differently; some writers reject the Western ideology of the African continent and its people, while others make room for compromise.

3.1.5 Affectivities: African Versus Western Cultural Values

As the society gets more complex and cosmopolitan, cultural patterns are changed and accommodate emerging ones. This is so with the issue of cultural values of the West straying into Africa. Kofi Awoonor (George Awoonor Williams), the Ghanaian poet from the Volta region, employed the use of euphemism to describe the infiltration of Western cultural values into Africa as "Hallelujah of our second self".

Orality essentially informs contemporary creativity, as we see in the literary works of poets like Niyi Osundare and Kofi Awoonor, who write in Yoruba and Ewe tongues. Osundare often code mixes, and incorporates the use of orature in his poetic compositions (see, for example, his poetry collections, *Songs of the Market Place*, and *Waiting Laughters*). Contemporary African poets translate poems from the pool of oral African renditions to foreign language(s), French, English, Portuguese and other inherited colonial languages. Since Africa is a conglomerate of ethnic nationalities from regions with different poetic patterns, oral poetry differs from region to region. For instance, among the Ghanaians, the Akan poetry praises the dead compared to the tonal pattern of oral recitation of Yoruba poetry. Oral recitation is regional, as it reveals the environment and life of the people. Akan poetry is richly enhanced through the use of drums and horns at the end of each poetic movement. An example of Akan poetry translated by Audu Koffi is given below:

He is the one,
O father wake up
What is it my child?
Was the Toucana crying
Really!
You are a good boy to
Mistake the horns of

Amaniampong for the crying of
Toucana.

The recitative genre is half-spoken and half-sung. It celebrates the dead or ancestors. Every age group among the Akan has its own poetry. Below is an example of Akan poetry that addresses Akan ancestors:

Gransire Opon Sasraku
I asking you to help me in clearing the forest to make a farm
Then I ask you to help me in felling trees on the farm
Then I ask you to help me in making mounds
for the yam seeds
but for harvesting the yams, I do not need your help…

The ancestor is usually summoned for assistance. The character in the poem is in search of honour, bravery and economic empowerment.

Another example of oral poetry of the Akan-speaking people of Ghana is the song of praises which a group of women often sing in praise of the protection and generosity of an Akan king:

Shall we praise God for the king
Let us praise His shower of blessing
Praise the Chief of the four corners
Our king of the centre
Boaten of Woonnoo, Akuamoa of Kyerekyere
When he was dedicating his new palace
He slaughtered cattle for his people
And caused women to cook for the town
He showered gifts on women
Secured the road to Sekyere …

The song dedicates and pays homage to the kindness of the king as the mouthpiece of God on earth. The king is praised greatly, for being security conscious, at the centre of unity, who recognises his people and involves them in ceremonies such as house warming or palace dedication. The society prays for the king, the community and the nation, placing the Almighty God and Akan king at the apex of government and control. The recitation is vital to the community and the king. The Akan drum and horn produce oral poetry in sounds as an accompanying instrument to the women's voices.

Oral poetry is also common among the Hausa in Nigeria. Praise poetry of the Hausa is often sung by praise singers as a tribute to the Emirs (Kings). The poetry of the Hausa is created to suit their social-economic

conditions and/or class distinction in the society. Their poems are sung to the beat of drums (*kalangu*) and other instruments. Some of the lines are epigrammatic, using phonemic sounds to create effects.
With its tonality, the Yoruba uses daily expression through idioms, metaphors and proverbs indirectly. Aspects of Yoruba life - harvesting, planting, masquerading, funerals, festivals, homage and worships of gods and goddesses like *Ogun* the god of Iron, *Sanponan*, god of poxes, to mention a few – are ready content for poetry and chants. Such epic poetry is generally called *Ewi*, which is chanted in high pitched voice accompanied by the drum.

The *Ewi* is classified into 'Rara', which is often chanted in a slow pace, like the chant of church litanies. Another is the 'Ofo' or 'Ogede', which are magic words employed to gain supernatural assistance. The latter is chanted in praise of an individual, deity, or thing, like the Iroko tree (Mahogany). Yoruba praise poems praise one's genealogy; glorify one's attributes or deficiencies. Such poems use repetition, digressions, epigrams, oxymora, allusions, hyperboles, heteronyms and word pictures. An epic poem is a major political poetry which deals with war. An epic poem embraces the bravery of the subject of praise. Below is an example of Yoruba epic poem of the legendary Yoruba warrior:

> Olugbon agbe offspring of a titled woman in the society of circumcisers
> The elephant grass does not grow in forest but in the farm clearing
> Man of war carrying sheaves of arrows
> Gunyandemi, an elderly man tilling his farm
> Rokademi, offspring of Eruuku
> Whoever fought a war for the Eso in their absence?
> Man of war carrying large numbers of arrows
> Plenty of agony-inflicting powers…

The poem discusses the legendary Yoruba field marshal of the Alafin of Oyo, the political centre of Yoruba Kingdom. Tradition says the real name of the field marshal is Yanbiolu, a weaver of clothes and a reputable military strategist. The King of Oyo ran into him while on one of his tours. Yanbiolu was carrying raffia (iko) with which he was weaving. Curious, the king asked his page to invite the strange man. Confused, the page called the strange man with raffia "Onikoyi", and that was how the name came to be. The name later became the strange man's significant imprint as he became the field marshal of Alafin (King) of Oyo who builds his kingdom solely on military prowess through the valour of the Onikoyi, who created a military force of about 1,460 soldiers.

Although heroic recitations have lost much of their traditional importance among West Africans, the poem too have assumed a new dimension while adhering to the changing time. Works of poetry in West Africa owe their rhetorical dimension and conventions to oral traditions. For example, Soyinka's *Idanre* reveals the characteristics and mythic prowess of Ogun, the god of metallurgy; while *Kongi's Harvest* depicts conflicts between the past and present, or traditional versus Western styled-democracy in Africa. Wole Soyinka's satires may have been written for the intellectuals, but he borrows largely from Yoruba oral tradition the same way Christopher Okigbo, the Igbo poet, invokes the spirit of his ancestor as seen in his poem, 'Heavensgate'.

Since 1966, volumes of literary writing in English increased with the emergence of such notable African writers like Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Taban Lo Liyong, Okot p. Bitek, David Rubadiri, John Mbiti and Joseph Kariuki. Each of these writers has drawn from his African background to create works of English expression. Most of such works made it possible for the new generation of Africans to read about events formerly celebrated only in oral poetry. Such historical events as the Mau Mau revolution of the 1950s, Maji Maji revolts of 1905, and the bitter experiences of post-independence African nations become subjects of literary discourse. The Ugandan poet, Okot p. Bitek's S*ongs of Okot* is a backlash on over-dependence on Western values and lifestyles by Africans. The poet rejects the West completely:

Woman
Shut up
Pack your things
Go!
Take all the clothes
I bought you
The beads, necklaces
And the remains
Of the utensils
I need no second-hand things …P.121

In the poem, Ocol, the Westernised African, dislikes his wife, the unrefined Lawino (Africa), a symbol of African traditional culture. Rather than refine her, he chooses to ridicule and despise her. Ocol is thus a failure who would not use his education to improve his culture. We see apparent spiritual and cultural disappointment in Western education and civilization, thus *Song of Lawino* merges the cultural, spiritual and political values of the people.

In East Africa, the traditional Gikuyu, Luo, Masai, Baganda and Bahima of Ankole are a cross-section of East Africans versed in oral tradition,

but with a strong attachment to the land, especially as they had to contend their land with the Europeans who forcefully acquired them. East African oral poets are preoccupied with praise names and recitations of poetry, for the protection of their land. For example, the Bahima cattle rearers of Uganda chant poetry called 'Omwevugi' in the evenings, as is the custom of the people.

Western dynamics in South Africa are quite different from those of East and West Africa. Africans have been subjected to the bitterness of imperial domination since the fifteen century. This bitterness reflects in their oral poetry. South African oral poetry has metrical rhythm, similes, personifications, metaphors, structural condensation and emotive repetition. An example is given below:

A lion came from Mokgalwana, roaring
It appeared from Mfete Willow grove;
It was not a lion, but a small cub
It was not a lion of any repute
It made a rush at the monster
The monster was a sechele motswasele
And the big lions, the old males
Stumbled away in flight.

The poem recalls the war of 1875-1883 between King Lentswe of the Kgatla and King Scheele of the Kwana. The former was a reputable king who had lived for about half a century and the latter a minor who became king in the year the war began.

The mock-heroic poem reduces the former king to a cub and the latter to the lion; the minor was the monster who later stumbles away in flight. The poem is repetitive for emphasis, and uses personification and symbolism up to the last line. Oral poetry serves to consolidate social issues in ancient and modern African societies, preserve culture, and respond to changes in the wider African societies.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. Define African Literature.
2. Discuss relativities and affectivities in African culture.

4.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have discussed the meaning of African Literature, the phases of African Literature, and what African culture entails. We have also discussed the relativities and regional differences in African cultures as well as how Western culture affects African cultural values.

In this unit, you have learnt the following:

- The definition of the concept of African Literature.
- Phases of African Literature.
- Western impression of Africa in the 1920s through the 1950s.
- African writers' reaction to Western negative portrayal of Africa.
- Relativities in African cultural practices.

5.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Define African Literature.
2. Outline the features of the phases of African Literature.
3. With the aid of oral poetry from any part of Africa, discuss cultured relativities in African culture.

6.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 2 PHASES OF AFRICAN POETRY IN ENGLISH (I)

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will give a general overview of the phases of African poetry. It will also discuss the specific pioneer phase of African Poetry, between the 1930s and 1940s, which includes the Francophone and Anglophone forms of poetic expressions.

2.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- differentiate the phases of African poetry
- review the pioneer phase of African poetry
- discuss the themes of African pioneer poetry
- explain the roles of pioneer African poets in the political independence of African nations.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Phases in African Poetry

There are four phases in the development of African poetry. These are: the pioneering phase (1930s and 1940s); the transitional phase (1950s and early 1960s); the modernist phase (mid-1960s and early 1970s); as well as the contemporary phase, which is the present.

The phases identified above are not rigidly separated by thematic preoccupations and mode of the style of the writers. Most of the writers are still writing, and their poems are not strictly bound by a particular phase. For Instance, the poetry of Abioseh Nichol easily fits into the transitional and contemporary phase. This is true of some of the early poems of Wole Soyinka and Kofi Awoonor, which reflect diverse regional thematic and stylistic concerns.

3.1.1 The Pioneering Phase (1930s and 1940s)

This phase refers to the writers of English and French expressions like Dennis Osadebey, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Gladys May Casely-Hayford, and Michael Dei-Anang. This phase also includes the Negritude poets of French expression, who resided outside Africa, and whose poems protest colonial oppression and exploitation. Their poems are mostly nostalgic reflections of Africa's past. The strong intensity of their physical exile from their nations in Africa informed the vigorous style of their poetry. Let us now discuss selected poems of this phase.

Senghor's 'Nuit de Sine' (Night in Sine)

'Nuit de Sine' is like a love letter from a son longing to be with his mother (Africa). The son recollects the joy of home and family, and the feelings of love and loneliness are palpable in the poem. The beauty and fragrance of an African night, the moon, stars, trees, the atmosphere of peace, calmness, and the allure of sleep are expressed with arching longing by the poet. Below is the first stanza:

> Woman, put on my forehead your
> balsam hands,
> your hands softer than fur.
> Up there, the tall palm trees
> swinging in the night breeze rustle
> hardly.
> Not even the nurse's song.
> Let the rhythmic silence rock us.
> Let's listen to its song, let's listen to
> the beating of our dark blood, let's
> listen
> To the beating-of the dark pulse of
> Africa in the midst of lost villages.
> (Translated by Germain Droogenbroodt)

Gladys May Casely-Hayford's 'Rejoice'

Gladys May Casely-Hayford lived between 1904 to 1950. She was the daughter of the Ghanaian nationalist, Joseph Casely-Hayford and

Sierra Leonean mother, Adelaide Casely-Hayford. Apart from poetry, Gladys was also into dance, painting, teaching, storytelling, music, and writing. Many of her earlier poems were published in literary journals like the *Atlantic Monthly* and *Opportunity, a Journal of Negro Life*. Her poems also appeared in the weekly newspaper, where she worked as a journalist, *Gold Coast Leader*. She has one poetry collection, *Take'um So*, which was published in 1948.

The poem, 'Rejoice', makes a case for black pride, asking Africans to revel in the colour of their skin and celebrate the positive values of Africa. Thus, words like rejoice, laughter, gracious, glorious, amongst others, are deliberately used to depict the state of mind the poetess wants her readers to adopt in an age where blacks were seen as inferior beings. The upbeat poem is goes thus:

Rejoice and shout with laughter
Throw all your burdens down,
If God has been so gracious
As to make you black or brown

For you a great nation,
A people of great birth
For where would you spring the flowers
If God took away the earth?
Rejoice and shout with Laughter,

Throw all your burdens down
Yours is a glorious heritage
If you are black, or brown.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Write briefly on the pioneer phase of African poetry, using one of the poems of the period as an example.

4.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have discussed the pioneer phase in African poetry, and the themes discussed. The 1920s and 1930s were awakening times for a number of Africans, many of whom were in schools and universities outside Africa. Through their attainment of the coloniser' languages, particularly English, French and Portuguese, these formally educated Africans wrote against the evils of colonialism, and sought to mobilise their people to get their independence from their colonisers. This way then, the literary works written in this period can be classified as having

a political undertone, thereby contributing to the independence quest of many African nations.

5.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

What do you understand by the pioneer phase of African poetry?

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UNIT 3 PHASES OF AFRICAN POETRY IN ENGLISH (II)

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will discuss the transitional phase of African poetry in English, from the 1950s and early 1960s). Below are the Learning Outcomes of this unit:

2.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the transitional phase of African poetry in English
- identify the themes of the poetry of this phase
- Identify the issues raised in Gabriel Okara's 'The Call of the River Nun'.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Transitional Phase

Particular African poets and their literary works can be grouped under the transitional phase. Some of these include Abioseh Nicol, Kwesi Brew, Gabriel Okara, Dennis Brutus, Joseph Kariuki and Lenrie Peters. These poets are known for the lyrical use of the English language to express their disposition to foreign cultures. This they often reveal in their physical, cultural and socio-political response to African culture.

Gabriel Okara's 'The Call of the River Nun' (1950)

This poem expresses a personal situation in the life of the poet, the prospect of death as seen in the symbolic use of "rivers". The laughter of the waves of the "River Nun" symbolises a passage from childhood to adulthood. Like the passage of the river, human life flows towards a dead end. The poet reveals his telepathic interaction with the river in the poem. The River Nun is a river in Niger Delta that runs through the poet's home town, Nembe. It is formed, together with River Forcados, from the River Niger.

The poem starts from a simple to a meditative and serious note. The nostalgic evocation of the poem is seen in the poet's reference to a "lapping" sound. It is this sound that the poet refers to as invitation of the river to him. The poem redirects the reader's attention back to an appreciation of the positive aspects of African values, beliefs and culture, in an environment that was filled with Western philosophies and presence. The poet states:

I hear your call!
I hear it far away;
I hear it break the circle of these crouching hills.
I want to view your face again and feel your cold embrace;
or at your brim to set myself and inhale your breath;
or like the trees, to watch my mirrored self unfold and span my days
with song from the lips of dawn.

I hear your lapping call!
I hear it coming through; invoking the ghost of a child listening, where
river birds hail your silver-surfaced flow.
My river's calling too!

Its ceaseless flow impels my found'ring canoe down its inevitable
course.
And each dying year brings near the sea-bird call, the final call that stills
the crested waves and breaks in two the curtain of silence of my
upturned canoe.

O, incomprehensible God!
Shall my pilot be my inborn stars to that final call to Thee.
O my river's complex course?

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Discuss the transitional phase of African poetry in English.

4.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have stated that a particular signifier of the transitional phase of African poetry in English is its lyrical use of the language to express a call back to African values and culture. A proponent of the go-back-to-base is Gabriel Okara, and is poem, 'The Call of the River Nun', was briefly discussed.

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UNIT 4 PHASES OF AFRICAN POETRY IN ENGLISH (III)

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit completes the phases of African poetry in English. It combines the modernist (mid-1960s and early 1970s) with the contemporary phases (1970 to present). Below are the Learning Outcomes:

2.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the modernist and contemporary phases of African poetry in English
- differentiate between the modernist and contemporary phases of African poetry in English
- identify the philosophy of the contemporary poet in English.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Modernist Phases

There may have been some conflicts between the African indigenous tradition of poetry and the poetic experimentations in Western languages, as observed in the poetry of Christopher Okigbo and Leopold Sedar Senghor, who were influenced by English poets like Ezra Pound and T.S Eliot. The modernist phase refers to the poetic experiment of the early twentieth century poets who rebelled against the poetic doctrine of the regular rhyme and metre of the nineteenth century.

This led to poetic experimentation by some African poets, using oral traditional materials such as translations from Ewe traditional dirges, by Kofi Awoonor, in the 1960s. In the same vein, the Nigerian poet, Christopher Okigbo, adopted local imagery in his poem, complementing it with foreign influences of Latin, Greek and English. For example, he recreated myths, local idioms, and rhythms in his 'Path of Thunder'.

In East Africa, a poetic license was freely adopted. For instance, Okot P' Bitek collected folk songs and translated them into English. The poets of this phase creatively experimented with materials from their oral tradition and foreign culture. The poetry of Christopher Okigbo, Wole Soyinka, Atukwei Okai, Mazisi Kunene, and Kofi Awoonor attest to this.

Christopher Okigbo's Poetry

In Christopher Okigbo's poem, 'The Passage', taken from his poetry collection, 'Labyrinths', he comes to back to his traditional African religion and asks for forgiveness from "Mother Idoto", his people's water goddess. This is because the poet believes that modern civilisation has driven the children of Africa from indigenous religion and beliefs and they need to confess their sins so that they can start afresh, renewed and stronger. This confession involves a form of cleansing, a total self-surrender to the water spirit that nurtures all creation. Okigbo says:

> BEFORE YOU, my mother Idoto,
> Naked I stand;
> Before your weary presence,
> A prodigal
> Leaning on an oil bean,
> Lost in your legend
> Under your power wait I
> On barefoot,
> Watchman for the watchword
> At heavensgate;
> Out of the depths my cry:
> Give ear and hearken.

The above poem reflects the poet's longing to be put right with his roots through the power of Mother Idoto, the water goddess. He pleads and waits, hoping that his cry will be hearkened to.

And in another poem, 'Watermaid', the poet is forgiven by the water goddess who reveals herself to him "wearing white light about her" as she appears beneath the ocean waves. However, the appearance of the water maid could not assuage the yearning of the poet. Rather, in the end, the sea leaves the poet downcast and inconsolable. Okigbo reveals

the confusion in the mind of an African because of the infiltration of an alien culture. This is even more evident in another of his poem, 'Lustra IV', Heavensgate, where the poet finds himself wrapped in a sense of guilt, the result of his alliance with a foreign culture. He seeks the strength to ward off the encroaching new religion:

So would I to the hills again
So would I
To where springs the fountain
There to draw from

The concern of the poem is self-purification/renewal or regeneration, but the poet believes that the best cleansing is through traditional ritual. The poet's initiation into an alien culture has enchained him and he seeks freedom from the confusion which the new culture has brought upon him. The use of "marble stretcher" in Okigbo's 'Labyrinth' could stand for a grave or the poet's contemplation of death. Accordingly, the diction is replete with words and phrases that give the eerie feeling and quality of death. The poet alternates between the physical world of the hospital environment and the spiritual. He invokes the images of religion while in search of enhanced spiritual well-being, and like a pilgrim, he carries a symbol of the tenacity of faith to which he is continually subjected. He searches the length and breadth of his existence - "from Dan to Beersheba" for spiritual fulfillment. After he received anesthesia, he relaxed and glimpsed "on the marble beyond the balcony". This phrase suggests a mental journey into the metaphysical.

3.2 The Contemporary Phases

There is no absolute distinction between the modernist and contemporary phases of African poetry in English, as seen in the poetry of Niyi Osundare, Hope Eghagha, Remi Raji, and Kofi Awoonor, to mention a few of them. These poets are known for their lyricism and serious thematic thrusts that include corruption, abuse of power, politics, and mysteries of human life and existence.

Kofi Awoonor's 'The Cathedral', a protest poem, reveals African disapproval of the Western mode of religious worship, social and economic as well as political Ideology. The Cathedral symbioses the vanity of Western religion and its sudden incursion into Africa's religious beliefs. The poet observes:

On this dirty patch
A tree once stood
shedding incense on the infant corn:

its boughs stretched across a heaven
brightened by the last fires of a tribe.

They sent surveyors and builders
who cut that tree
planting in its place
A huge senseless cathedral of doom.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Discuss the thematic concerns of the contemporary phase, with particular reference to Christopher Okigbo's poem, 'The Passage' and Kofi Awoonor's 'The Cathedral'.

4.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have looked at the modernist and contemporary phases of African poetry in English, the ideologies of the phase, and some prominent poets of the phase.

5.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Identify the difference(s) between modernist and contemporary phases of African poetry in English.

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MODULE 2 BLACK VOICES AS AFRICAN LITERATURE

UNIT 1 AFRICAN FICTION IN ENGLISH (I)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will explore the beginnings of African fiction, the pioneers, the nature of the African literary form, and other significant developments, including themes, literary activities and affectivities across generations. Below are the Learning Outcomes of this unit:

2.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the beginning of the African novel in English, with regional peculiarities
- identify the pioneers in West African fiction
- outline and differentiate the focus and themes of the pioneers of West African prose fiction
- revisit the influence of missionaries and British colonialists in West African prose fiction
- explain the influence of folklore in West African prose fiction.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Beginnings of the Novel in English

The novel is an imported literary form. Poetry and drama are part of the African heritage, as they functioned within the oral tradition of African peoples and culture. Most early African novels are anthropological in outlook, with stereotyped characters. This perspective is common with prose fiction in West Africa, East, and South Africa, for which revolt is a recurring theme.

3.2 Pioneers in West African Fiction

The beginning of West African prose fiction may be traced to the narratives of the Ghanaian, Richard Emmanuel Obeng's *Eighteenpence* (1943) and joseph Ephraim Casely–Hayford's *Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation* (1911). In the latter novel, the hero, Kwamankra, is seen in London discussing with Whiteley, a white Divinity student, on Christianity, a subject that is amply explored in the novel. The main character believes in a black God and is of the view that Jesus Christ is Ethiopian. The setting of the novel moves from London to Africa, where a university is to be established. The protagonist is sent to London to help translate books for the proposed university.

Apart from the themes of Christianity and education in the novel, themes of love Heaven, politics, culture, and marriage also abound. Tandor–Kuma, a servant, is unable to marry a lady of his choice for social reasons. Through the protagonist, Kwamankra, the author makes an appeal to the Western world that African beliefs, culture, and knowledge are original, wholesome, and transformative. The author discusses the possibility of the cultural unity of Africa, America, and the Caribbean.

In what looks like an extended allegory, the hero of *Eighteenpence,* the first long novel in English published in Ghana, the hero, Akrofi, buys a cutlass on credit to begin farming, but is unable to pay the amount when the grace period is over. He then agrees to work for his creditor, Owusu, the farmer. Owusu's wife falsely accuses him of attempted rape. The woman is first tried in a colonial court for failing to report the rape and for abusing certain aristocrats. The judgement swings in favour of Akrofi, who later, through hard work and integrity, rose to become a wealthy farmer in his community.

The other part of the novel discusses Akrofi's marriage, and his life as a successful farmer. Out of envy and jealousy, he is arrested for refusing to disclose a treasure he found on his farm. His uncle arrives and causes separation between him and his wife. He gives a farewell speech to his three daughters, Lily, Violet and Rose. His uncle dies, he is invited back to settle in the village, finds more treasures, and becomes wealthy and reunited with his family.

The language of *Eighteenpence* is strict; there is also the use of invective language – "horticultural advice" (p.161), "Akrofi's heart thudded with joy", (p. 20). Unlike *Ethiopia Unbound, Eighteenpence* is quite humorous. For instance, when Akrofi plays a gramaphone he received as a present, the labourers who had not seen one before ran out of the house and later warned their master not to play with the machine again, otherwise, they will go away.

Also, when Konaduwa, the farmer's wife, was asked to plead guilty or not in the court, she replied humorously, "when a case has not been tried, how can one say whether one is guilty or not? Even if the case has been tried, how can you expect one to pronounce judgment against oneself? Tell the commissioner that I cannot possibly answer the question." (p. 41).

Some of the second-generation West African novelists in English include Chinua Achebe, Timothy Aluko, Cyprian Ekwensi, Onuora Nzekwu, Gabriel Okara, and Amos Tutuola. Tutuola's *The Palmwine Drinkard (1952)* was the first of the listed names of the generation to be published.

Robert Wellesley Cole's *Kosssoh Town Boy* (1960) is the real-life story of his childhood in Sierra Leone. The strict father of three boys and two girls accommodated visitors to his home. He makes his family the centre of attraction to all. The family's daily activities, domestic affairs, family service, and dosings of castor oil are the main concern of the book.

William Canton's *The African (1960)* is the writer's borrowing from his own experience as a boy in Sierra Leone and a student in the United Kingdom. Its setting is the imaginary Songhai. The writer's childhood mirrors that of any African boy. The writer reflects on the shattering effects of European influence over the quiet and innocent village life, and the naivety of African children towards modernity. Camara Laye's *The African Child (1955)* shows conscious craftsmanship, like Canton's *The African.* The former novel tells the story of Laye's childhood experience, growing up in the rustic village life in Coroussa, Senegal. The novel explores a people's culture that is experiencing Western incursion.

Both J. W. Abruquah's *Catechist (1965)* and Francis Selormey's *Narrow Path (1966)* are set in Ghana. Afram's life story is told by his son in *Catechist.* Afram, a fisherman, is ambitious and determined to learn English and read and write. He leaves for a school in the city, but was reluctant to part with the familiar scenery and noises of the night and general experience of village life. He leaves with few possessions and five shillings given by his mother and uncle. He manages to get educated; though he could not speak in the pure accent of the English man, one of the children achieved that. He died a happy man.

The Narrow Path is autobiographical. The writer tells the story of his boyhood days in a village, his school experience, living with his parents, his grandfather, as well as activities of the village fishermen. Themes of endurance, Christianity, and education are treated in the novel. Also explored in the novel are conflicts - the conflict between Africa and Europe; and the generational conflict between the author and his father, an educated school teacher.

3.3 West African Novelists in English

The consciousness of the present-day West African writers about their cultural environment clashes with reactions to imported values. Many African writers are dedicated to the promotion of the African cause and refuse to accept certain conditions that are alien, coercive, and disintegrative. Whatever may be the writer's creative constructs, the literary works, in the main, are addressed to Africans and African readers.

Things Fall Apart (1958), Chinua Achebe's first novel, deals with cultural contact and conflict. The hero of the novel, Okonkwo, is determined never to fail like his father, Nnoka, and emerges as a successful farmer and polygamist. The valiant, proud, and chieftaincy titleholder of Umuofia is hunted by the fear of failure. In the Week of Peace, he beats one of his wives, and shoots at his second wife on another occasion. So as not to be considered weak, he kills a boy, Ikemefuna, who had been entrusted to his care. It is on the basis of these that he is banished to his maternal clan, his existence reduced to despair. Achebe argues:

> His life had been ruled by a great passion
> to become one of the lords of the clan.
> That had been his life spring. And he had
> all but achieved it. Then everything had
> been broken. He had been cast out of his

> Clan like a fish on to a dry, sandy
> beach, panting (p.117)

The hero is aware of how the missionaries have taken over Umuofia, the village from which he had been exiled, the success of the missionaries, the conversion of members of the society including his son, Nwoye. He returns home to a different Umuofia, different because the villager's aristocrats and outcasts have joined the white strangers. Christianity has taken a firm stronghold, with its association with government and commerce. Okonkwo is determined to fight the white men; he leads a group of people to demolish the church, beheads one of the messengers of the white men, and expects the support of his people, but they ignore him. Frustrated, he hangs himself.

In the novel, the hero asserts himself against tribal law and Christian tenets in the overriding desire to prove himself against failure and psychological change. Achebe uses his main character to probe the social fabric of the African cultural society using a number of literary devices. The novel explores sociological data, conversion of the unwanted outcasts to Christianity, education, the significance of oracles, justice dispensation, festivals, religious functions, and functional roles of wives in polygamous settings, amongst others. Folktales, proverbs, and anthropological settings are well integrated into the novel. The rich artistry of the classic African novel genre has earned the novel international respectability. *Things Fall Apart* has been translated into more than seventy world languages.

In *No Longer at Ease* (1960), Achebe chronicles the travails of a young Nigerian returnee into an independent Nigeria. Obi returns to Nigeria after university life in England. He desires a new nation free of corruption. Back home, the Umuofia Progressive Union, which had sponsored his education overseas, demands a repayment of the loan quickly. Clara, his fiancée, is *Osu*, a descendant of cult slaves. Members of the union say he should have nothing to do with her, but Obi insists on his individual right, quarrels with the union, and sinks more into debt. He advises Clara to abort her pregnancy, already objected by her parents. At last, Obi is involved in disgrace and court trials.

Arrow of God (1964) examines the problem of African tradition and new European modes through the relationship between a priest and gods in Eastern Nigeria. Ezeulu, a symbol of tradition, is opposed to Winterbottom, the British Resident Officer. But they recognise the admirable qualities in each other. Ezeulu sends his son, Odochi, to the new mission school to learn the secrets of the stranger. Winterbottom summons the old priest to inform him that he had been appointed as Warrant Chief in the area. Ezeulu disobeys the summon, and insults one

of the arrogant messengers. As punishment, he is harassed and detained for five weeks for insulting the government. As a result, the priest of the god of Umuaru is unable to eat two of the sacred yams necessary for the feast of the new yam. When he is released, Ezeulu avenges the villagers for refusing to support him; delays the feast for two more months. The delay in rites extends the period of harvest; the people are starved, and one of Ezeulu's sons dies while taking part in the night masquerade festival. Thus, Achebe explores the serious psychological problems that ensued from the tumultuous relationship between Ezeulu, the god, the community, and the District Officer.

A Man of the People (1966) is different from Achebe's earlier novels. Chief Nanga, the corrupt politician, invites Odili, the main character, to visit him in Lagos. Odili is involved with Chief Nanga when they quarrel over Elsie, Odili's girlfriend. Odili leaves the house of his host for his old friend, Maxwell. With the help of Odili, Maxwell and his friends found a new party that would dethrone Chief Nanga and his corrupt Political Party. While contesting Chief Nanga's seat under the new party, Odili encounters difficulties. He is dismissed from his school during the campaign. Chief Nanga tries to bribe Odili with cash and promise of a scholarship through the latter's father, if he withdraws his candidacy. At a meeting, Chief Nanga beats up Odili and he is hospitalised. Maxwell is killed, and the Army moves in to quell the confusion.

The first two novels of T. M. Aluko, O*ne Man, One Wife (*1959), and *One Man, One Matchet* (1964) are different from Achebe's narrative style of upholding the tradition of a people. The major concerns of Aluko are manifested in his short stories, 'The New Engineer' and 'The Vision of Brother Sandrach'.

Aluko's humorous *One Man, One Wife* is about the struggle between Christianity and traditional religion. It chronicles the trials of Reverends David and Royasin, and Elder Jeremaih, Joshua, and his son, Jacob. Royasin is dismissed when Jacob's wife of four days is discovered to be pregnant and Royasin is suspected of being the father. What follows is a string of misfortunes and deaths narrated in a humorous way by the author. The zeal of Reverend David helps break up the church; in the attempt to reunite it, he finds out that one of his stalwarts, Joshua, is killed by Sango, the Yoruba god of thunder; Jacob's wife dies at childbirth; Chief Asolo's favourite wife dies of smallpox; Chief Asolo evades arrest by drinking poison. The novel blends the serious wrapped around humour in swift succession. At last, the hypocrisy of Pastor David is revealed.

In *One Man, One Matchet*, set in Ipaja, in a newly-independent Nigeria, an agricultural officer who just arrived from England ordered the destruction of old cocoa trees infected with the disease to avoid a spread to the whole crops. The local farmers oppose the plan, and instigate a conspiracy between the government and Apeno. Udo Akpan, the new Nigerian District Officer, connives with the agricultural officer. The villagers are surprised, and decide to throw their weight behind their own man, Benja-Benja, a loquacious politician and journalist. The Udo Akpan and Benja Benja clash, resulting in violence, before peace is restored.

Aluko's *Kinsman and Foreman* (1966) discusses a conflict between a new Engineer who just returned to Nigeria, and the Foreman of the Public Works department. But *Chief the Honourable Minister* (1970), set in Afromaco land, satirises the national democratic government, and the Freedom for All Party, which emerged at the end of British colonial rule. In the novel, government officials are given broad attention. People of Afromaco land are used by government officials to amass wealth. The meaninglessness and futility of government functionaries are revealed in the novel. Aluko ridicules political leaders as liars who merely masquerade as political leaders.

The poetry and prose of Gabried Okara, the Ijaw writer, span two generations. His novel, *The Voice (1964)*, is similar in literary artistry to Wole Soyinka's *The Interpreters*. Okara belongs to first-generation Nigerian writers like Ekwensi, Achebe, and Tutuola. In Okara's allegorical work, Okolo, the protagonist, questions his society on relevant socio-cultural issues. After his education abroad, Okolo searches for the truth in his own village, Amatu, but met a wall of resistance from Chief Izongo, who represents the conservative tradition with his rigid values, and his former friend, Abadi, who later deserts him. It is the outcasts of his society, including witches and cripples, who decide to help him. Okolo leaves for Sologa on voluntary exile. He is accused of attempting to seduce a girl while on the way to Sologa. He is freed after taking an oath to prove his innocence. He returns to Amatu against the advice of a witch. Face to face with Izongo, Okolo dies, but his values remain.

Amos Tutulola's *The Palmwine Drinkard* (1952) discusses the story of a man much addicted to drinking palmwine who goes in search of his deceased palmwine tapper. He encounters a number of adventures, captures Death, overcomes skull, and freed a lady the skull has held captive, who he later marries. His victory qualifies him to go in search of the dead palmwine tapper. The couple has a child who is skillful in mysterious pranks. They try to kill him, but a half-bodied baby emerges from the ashes. They are compelled to carry him during their journey,

but dispose of him when they met Drum, Song, and Dance. The hero transforms into a canoe and his wife rows the ferry, as they have no money left to continue the journey. They escape from white, long, and filthy creatures. The creature of Wrath is kind to them. They escape from the spirit of prey, greedy bush, and unreturnable. Heavenly Town, Faithful Mother in the white tree take care of them. They sell their Death, retain Fear, get into the wrong town, arrive at the dead's town mistakenly, where they find the dead palm-wine tapper. He cannot go with them, but gives them an egg. While returning, dead babies were after them, a man seize and put them in a sack. They escape, and find themselves in the stomach of Hungry creatures, but the protagonist arrives to save his town from famine, with the help of his magic egg.
Tutulola's works are fusion of folklore and modernity. The Yoruba writer deliberately revisits Yoruba belief in the myth of the cosmic world. For instance, death is not a finality, but merely a change in a physical position to continue a form of existence in another world, far from the former, as in the case of the palm-wine tapper. Other works by the writer include *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* (1954); *Simbi and the Satyr of the Dark Jungle* (1955); *The Brave African Huntress* (1958).

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What do you think are the thematic concerns of the first generational African authors studied in this unit?

4.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have discussed the beginnings of African novel in English, by looking at the literary works of pioneer West African novelists in English.

In this unit, you have learnt:

- Beginnings of the African novel in English
- Pioneers in West African novelists in English
- West African novelists in English
- New West African novelists.

5.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Summarise any novel of your choice from the pioneer West African prose fiction.

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UNIT 2 AFRICAN FICTION IN ENGLISH (II)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit completes our discussion of African novelists in English. We have written the unit to discuss and reveal the nature and development of the East, Central, as well as South African novels in English. Below are the Learning Outcomes of this unit:

2.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- identify some East and Central African novelists
- discuss the plot of any of the East and Central African novels
- outline the notable South African novelists
- explain the themes in some of these novels.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 African Writers as Activists

Generally, writers writing in English in East, Central, and South Africans are considered ‘rebels’. The writers express culture consciousness, much like their West African counterparts. Themes of the writers from East, Central, and South Africa are directed at their environment. This is different from the non-hostile activism of West African writers. Unlike the West African writers, the East, Central and South African writers arrived late to the expression of their arts. Their complex experiences reflect greatly in their artistry.

3.2 East and Central African Novelists

The Kenyan, Khadambi Asalache's first novel, *A Calabash of Life* (1967), reveals the heroic story of Shiyuka, a young warrior who is determined to repossess the vatirichi chieftaincy, which has been stolen from his family by Dembla. He kills all his opposition and regains the title.

The story is more than the simple plot it is given. Multiplicity of characters and incidents brightens the conflicts and resolution in the plot. The bravery and cultured nature of the hero make him triumph over his enemies. Asalache translates the oral poetry of his people into fiction. Legson Didimu Kayira's *I Will Try* (1966) is autobiographical, and narrates his years as a boy and his effort to be educated in his Mpalae village in the Karonga district of Malawi. *The Looming Shadow* (1967) concerns the conflict between traditional beliefs and modern Christian faith. *Jingala* (1969) further explores the strain and discord between the old and the new in the relationships between Jingala, a widower, and his only son, Gregory. The boy scorns his father as a result of his education, abandons tradition, and prefers to be a Catholic priest. The Kenyan Leonard Kibera's short stories, co-authored with his brother, were collected in *Potent Ash* (1967). His first novel, *Voices in the Dark* (1970), is about the protagonist, Gerald Timundu, an unsuccessful playwright who uses his plays to chronicle the unhappy fate of Mau Mau fighters, who the government has relegated to the cold ashes of a lost history. The Ugandan, Bonnie Lubega's *Outcasts* (1971) centres on the protagonist, Karekyezi, who with his family and people are regarded as outcasts, for they are dirty, rough, filthy, and uncivilized. They are in charge of taking care of the cattle of their landowners. The novel is filled with imagery of smell – punugent odours of human and animal waste and dirty environment. Karekyezi plays along with the way the villagers view him, while behind them, he steals their cattle. The story ends with the angry villagers dismissing him.

3.3 South African Novelists

The first novel of the prolific South African author, Peter Abraham, was not published until 1942. Writing in indigenous literature to an extent hindered the growth of South African literature in English. Beginning with the theme of corruption in the city, Abraham moves to the theme of the evil of oppression. *Tell Freedom* (1954) reviews the intolerable social system in South Africa that forces youths to doubt their dreams and leave the society of evil politics. *Dark Testament (1942) and Song of the City* (1945) describe life in contemporary South Africa. *Mine Boy (1946)* is the story of Xuma, who leaves his country home to the bright

lights of the city. He is surprised at the city's harsh reality, where only money matters; gambling, lawlessness, shoddiness of people's lives, pimpery and prostitution define the nature of the city.

Path of Thunder (1945) is more on the average "coloured" South African. Through the eyes of Lanny Swartz, the main character, the reader sees the real South Africa, segregated along the lines of colour and class. The protagonist is swallowed up by the poverty and corruption that have enslaved his people. Other novels of the writer include *A Night of Their Own* (1965), *This Island Now* (1966), *A Wreath for Udomo* (1956), *Wild Conquest* (1950), and *Return to Gholi* (1956). Exiled from his native South Africa, Alex La Guma was a realistic and passionate writer who shared every moment with his people; moment of wants, likes, dislikes, hatred, failures, and success. His *A Walk in the Night (1962)* evokes the world of the hero, Michael Adonis; a South African life of violence, crime, punishment, apathed regime, and the pervading unequal existence in South Africa. *The Stone Country* (1967) describes the writer's experience in prison, the violence, hatred, and love. John Adams, the protagonist, is imprisoned for his fight against the apatheid regime in South Africa. The prison is itself a microcosm of the larger South African political society. Some of Alex La Guma's short stories published in the *Quartet* (1965) include 'Out of Darkness' and 'A Glass of Wine'.

There is also the Zambian writer and critic, Andreya Masiye, who wrote *The Lonely Village* (1951), a book of short stories in Nyanja, a Zambian language. *Before Dawn* (1971) was published in English. It describes life in a village in Chiparamba valley in the 1930's. The story revolves around Kavumba, an orphan, whose mother got trapped in the clash between tradition and European medicine.

Ezekiel Mphalele, regarded as one of the founding fathers of modern African literature, in 1977, changed his name from Ezekiel to Es'kia. He attended school when he was thirteen. He completed High School, taught English and Afrikans, and became the fiction editor of *Drum Magazine.* His short story, *Down Second Avenue* (1959), an autobiographical work, reveals the terrifying conditions of living under the South African apatheid regime. His other literary works, *Living and the Dead* (1961); *In Corner* B (1967); *The Unbroken Song* (1981); and *Renewal Time* (1988) are short stories about problems of the African continent.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Discuss the themes explored in any East African novel of your choice.

4.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have discussed some East, Central, as well as South African novels.
We have also learnt the following:

- Novels and novelists in East and Central Africa;
- South African novels and novelists;
- Themes in selected East, South, and Central African novels;
- Plot in East, South, and Central African novels.

5.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Summarise a novel or short story of your choice, selecting from East, Central, or South African novelists.

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UNIT 3 AFRICAN LITERATURE IN PORTUGUESE

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

We have designed this unit to discuss African literature written in Portuguese across the three genres of literature. Below are some of the Learning Outcomes of this unit:

2.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- trace the development of Portuguese literature
- explain the poetry of Portuguese-speaking Africans
- discuss themes of selected works of writers of Portuguese expression
- identify major writers of the contemporary Portuguese.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 African Literature in Portuguese

African literature in Portuguese has not been given the attention it deserved in the discussions of African literature, despite its originality. Most of the writing comes from Angola, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Guinea, and Sao Tome.

Portuguese literature had an early beginning with the publication of the Angolan novel of Hipólito Raposo, *Ana a Kalunga: os filhos do mar* (Ana and Kalunga, the Sons of the Sea) in 1926. Oscar Bento Ribas, an

Angolan, regarded in the literary world as the founder of Portuguese prose in Africa, and one of the pioneer writers of the history and folklore of his people, the Mbundu, published his first novel in 1927, *Nuvens que Passam* (Passing Cluds) and in 1929, *Resgate de uma Falta* (Rescue from a Fault). The first Mozambique novel was written in 1934 by Amalia Proenca Norte, *Em Portugal e Africa* (In Portugal and Africa), followed by Fausto Duarte's novel, *Aua,* published in Guinea in the same 1934. In the same vein, the 1916 publication of *Versos* earned Costa Alegre, from Sao Tome, the pioneer in poetry. The early impressive literary record of the Portuguese is not in doubt, considering that there had been relationships between the Portuguese and Africans as early as 1482. The sixteenth-century journal of Christopher Columbus, an explorer, testified to this. The early writing of African-speaking Portuguese is evident in journals, travel writings, and creative accounts of literature written by traveler settlers.

However, the creation of the V*ames descobrir Angola* (We Discovered Angola) movement in 1948 encouraged many writings on the history, culture, and folklore of the Angolan people. Chief among these writers is Oscar Ribas. The white Portuguese, Castro Soromenho, who had lived among the Angola people for many years, also portrays a realistic picture of Angola through a number of his novels including *Homen'ssem Caminho* (Men without a Way), published in 1942. The plot narrates the story of a young man's defence of his tribe against another tribe. There is also *Calenga* (1945), a love story.

3.2 Poetry by Portuguese-speaking Africans

The earliest published poetry of Portuguese-speaking Africans is traced to Costa Alegre, who published his poetry in 1916, with 'A negra' (The Black Woman) being one of them. The poem extols the beauty of African women, more in the realm of Negritude writers idealizing Africa:

> … black woman, mimosa tender, beautiful coal
> Which produces the diamond.
> Put your open beautiful face
> on my chest
> Sleep girl, deserted dove
> I wake for you.

It is generally believed that the poetry of Viriato da Cruz, an Angolan, started the nationalist trend in the poetry of Portuguese-speaking Africans. His poem, 'Kola Nut" through the use of symbolism and imagery, presents the allurement of a new civilization against the old

tradition. uses symbolism to patronize a kolanut seller. His other poem, 'So Santo' (Mr. Santo) narrates the travails of Mr. Santo who is the recipient of compassion and understanding from his neighbours because of the hard times he has fallen into. Only his old grandmother believes his trials are the result of a just retribution. Then in 'Mama Negra' (Black Mother), da Cruz goes on an idolization trail, extolling the virtues of motherhood and Mother Africa:

> Your existence mother, living drama of a race
> Drama of flesh and blood
> Written by life with the pen of centuries
> Through your voice
> Came voices of plantations
> U.S.A., Brazil, Cuba…

Poetry from Cape Verde refelect a longing to flee from their home country to a faraway place over the sea, as seen in 'Terra longe' (Distant Land), a poem by Pedro Corsino Azevedo which makes an appeal to his compatriots who long to leave their homeland for a faraway place. There is also Jorge Barbosa's poem, 'Poema do Mar" (Poen of the Sea), which explores the emotions of desire and frustration of those wanting to flee from the burning sands of their country:

> The demand at every hour
> To go away is brought to us by the sea.
> The despairing hope for the long journey
> And yet to be always forced to stay.

For the Portugues-speaking Africans in Sao Tome and Principe, their poetry is a protest against the dismal conditions of black workers, and the insensitivity of Portuguese colonialists. For instance, Francisco Jose Tenreio's poetry denounces the class-based environment of his society, and urges a rejection of the social stratification by all in his poems, 'Ilha de nome santo" (Island with the Name of a Saint) (1943), and 'Romance de Seu Silva Costa' (Romance of your Silva Costa). Alda do Espirito Santo (also known as Alda Graça), a poet and nationalist who wrote her country's national anthem titled, 'Independência Total' was even more fierce in her denunciation of the colonial society. Her poetry inspires patriotism, but also a revolt against the Portugueses colonialists. Her poetry specifically celebrates working-class women who are not only wives and mothers, but also fighters. One of the most popular poems in this regard is titled '*By the Água Grande'* translated by Marisa Bruno):

> Bound for the fields, by Agua Grande,
> Black women beat and beat cloth against stone.
> They beat and sing songs of their home.

They sing and laugh laughs full of scorn,
Tell stories…tossed into wind.
Strongly they laugh, keeping cloth against stone,
Turning to white the cloth that they clean.
The children play! And the waters sing!
The children in gay waters play…
Keeping baby black boy in the reeds…

The cries that the black women by the river sing
Go quiet at the hour of return…fall still returning to the fields.

(Culled from the literary blog, Bookshy - #100AfricanWomenwriters)

has the flovour of David Diop's verse, as seen in the uprising and its repression by the Portuguese:

The blood of those fallen
In the forest of death
The innocent bold
That soaks the earth
In a shuddering silence
Will fertilize the earth
Sings the hope
For a world without barriers
Where freedom becomes the banner
Of all human beings. (p.259)

Angolan literature also expresses socio-cultural reality within the erea of Portuguese expansion. The poetry and fiction of Fernando Monteiro de Castro Soromenho, Oscar Ribas, Agostino Neto, and Thomas de Cruz attest to this. They were fully committed to the Negritude ideology of quest for identification.

Joaquim Dias Cordeiro da Matta (1857 – 1894), the earliest Angolan poet of the nineteenth century, a writer, historian, poet, and folklorist, called for a literary activity that is rich in the history and folklore of the Angolans, as many of his literary works, including *Filosofia Popular em Provérbios Angolenses* (1891), attest to. Another Portuguese-speaking Angolan writer was Agostinho Neto (1922 – 1979). A politician, medical doctor, and poet, he was the first president of Angola (1975 – 1979). His poems are revolutionary, combative, and emotional, written in a nationalist temper. A number of his poems, including 'Farewell at the Hour of Parting', 'Old Black Man', 'Contract Workers'and 'The Marketwoman' not only reflects the dehumanizing state of Angolan people under Portuguese rule, but also call them to rise up from their stupor and change the status quo. The white Angolan poet, Antonio

Jacinto (1924 -1991), was also a politician and short story writer. Also known as Orlando Tavora, his poems include'Monangaba', which is Kimbundu's word for the sons of a slave, and 'Bailarina Negra' (Black Dancer).

From Angola, we now move to Mozambique. We start with the poet usually regarded as the "greatest" in the country because of his sustained anti-stance: José Craveirinha (1922 – 2003). Of the three pioneer protest poets in the country - Marcelino dos Santos, Noémia de Sousa, and José Craveirinha – he was regarded as the greatest. Also a writer and journalist, his poems, written in Portuguese, denounce racism (see two of his poems, 'Griti Negro' – Black Shout; and 'Sangue da minha mãe' – My Mother's Blood) and celebrate the rich culture of his people (See 'Quero ser Tambor' – I want to be a Drum). Jose Cravirinha's poetry reveals his country through protagonist in "apenas" (just) for instance seeks happiness in the midst of despair. The opening lines of 'Griti Negro' go thus:

I am coal!
And you tear me brutally out of my hole.
Boss, I am the wealth you stole
… but not for ever, boss, no!

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Trace the development of Portuguese literature.

4.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have discussed African literature in Portuguese, with reference to the people's prose and poetry.

In this unit, we have also learnt:

- The beginning of African literature in Portuguese
- Angolan literature
- Mozambique literature

5.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

How is poetry in Portuguese-speaking Africa Negritude in perspective?

6.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 4 AFRICAN DRAMA IN FRENCH AND ENGLISH

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

We have designed this unit to reflect African drama in French and English, beginning with early-stage craft, through Yoruba popular drama, theatrical performance and cultural revolution across French and English-speaking West Africa. Below are the Learning Outcomes of this unit.

2.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the development of African drama
- explain the focus of any playwright of your choice in a chosen play
- identify some African playwrights discussed in this unit
- compare the plays of contemporary playwrights discussed in this unit.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 African Drama in French and English

African creativity developed from the anonymous to the individual and the relationship that co-exist between the individual and his or her society. With the advent of written drama, the theatre moved from the shrine through the market place to the state.

Ecole Normale William Ponty and Herbert Isaac Ernest Dhlomo (1903 – 1956), a South African poet and playwright, are known names at the beginning of African drama in English and French. The former was a government teachers' school located in St. Louis, Senegal. Students came from many parts of Africa including French West Africa, French Equitorial Africa, Togo, and Cameroon. With the establishment of colonial teaching in the 1930's, students began to write plays which are presented at the end of the academic year. Many of these plays centered around beliefs and customs of the Senegalese people. The French colonialists monitored the plays closely to ensure that no criticism against the French government and its policy of assimilation was contained therein. The first African play in French was written by the Dahomean students of the school at the end of the 1932-1933 session. It was titled, 'La Derniere entrevue de Behanzin et de Bayol' or 'L'Entrevue de Samory et du Caitaine Peroz'. The play showed the encounter between the independent 19th century dahomean king, Behanzin, and a French colonialist who wanted to annex the African monarch's territory. Again, in line with the French colonialists' attitude, Africans and their rulers were portrayed as unintelligent and submissive. In spite of the colonialists' views, however, the production of plays by Ecole Normale William Ponty led to, after many years, the development of Francophone theatre, with the establishment of a number of cinemas and public theatres. Ironically, it was through the policies of the French Governor-General, Bernard Cornut-Gentille, in charge of French colonies in West Africa from 1951 to 1956, that the theatre enjoyed a bigger boost through the establishment of over a hundred cultural centres in the French Protectorate in West Africa. By this time, Ecole Normale William Ponty has stopped producing plays, as they focused wholly on academic matters.

Herbert Isaac Ernest Dhlomo, regarded as one of the founding fathers of South African literature in English, co-founded, with his brother, in 1932, the Bantu Dramatic Society. In 1935, his first play was published – *The Girl who Killed to Save*. Regarded as the first African play in English, it is rooted in tradition and history, and is based on a historical event – the cattle-killing of the Xhosa people in 1857. Dhlomo supported the move as a means of doing away with the negative practices of African culture, and embracing the positive aspects of the colonialists' lifestyle – formal education, Christianity, and capitalism. But in a later play, *Cetshwayo*, Dhlomo did a turn-around: he lambasted the policies of the colonialists and the frustrations of educated South Africans who were beginning to be seen as traitors.

The play is set in the 1950s and revolves around a historical South African warrior, Cetshwayo, who not only defeats his brother, Mbuyazi, in a battle for who would succeed their father, but also faced a Christain

king and his rival brother's ally, Shepstone. The play goes on to portray the moves and counter-moves between the principal characters, until Cetshwayo eventually conceded to Shepstone. However, Dhlomo uses the play to air his views on the struggle between 'contemporary' white colonial Christians and 'traditional' black Africans.

In a dialogue between Shepstone and his assistant, Park, the playwright critiques colonial policies which undermine the dignity of their African subjects:

> PARK: It seems to me, Sir, your policy
> seeks to create two different civilisations
> and two conflicting states in one country at
> one and the same time…
> Human influences, feelings, thoughts and
> actions seep and penetrate through the strongest
> walls…there is no western and eastern, white or
> black civilization
>
> SHEPSTONE: But I have provision for educated
> progressive Natives. They will be exempted from
> the operation of Native Law.
>
> PARK: Still, I see difficulties…Your policy
> might defeat its own ends, unless it is so Amended
> in the future, as to be repressive. As time goes on
> and more natives become educated and civilized,
> the Europeans will either be ungulfed by the flood
> of educated Natives, or devise means to keep back
> the bulk of cultured and exempted Native.

Joseph Boakye Danquah (1895 – 1965) was a politician, writer, lawyer, and playwright from Ghana. It is generally believed that he gave Ghana her name. The only one he wrote, *The Third Woman: A Play in Five Acts* (1943) is based on the Akan myth of how the high god created three different kinds of women. The playwright equates this with three different types of historical developments: the traditional, colonial, and independent. He also introduced the Ananse spider folklore into the plot of the play. Ananse symbolises the world of peace. The third woman, Dudente, opposes Africa against Europe. The conflict becomes more obvious when Dudente tells the king that everything of "permanent value… inherited from the realistic West" has been lost. The Chief Priest expressed a desire for the liberty of women, to which Dubente responded:

> The contribution of the Western

culture to Woman brought freedom
That freedom must have inspired
The creation of the Third Woman…

While there is a conscious search for a good woman by man, the playwright recreated the West symbolically, using the familiar language of the Bible, observing the unities of time, place, and action, as a pioneer of African drama in English.

Keita Fodeba (1921 – 1969) was a dancer, poet, and playwright from Guinea. He founded the theatrical troupe, Theatre Africain, which later became known as Les Ballets Africains. The troupe performed a number of Mande cultures and traditions. In 1957, after writing the narrative poem, 'Aube Africaine' (African Dawn), it was staged as a ballet performance. The play is based on the Thiaroye massacre of 1944, where about 300 French west African soldiers who had mutinied over poor pay and conditions, were killed.

Joe de Graft (1924 – 1978) was a Ghanian poet, educator, dramatist and playwright. In his play, *Sons and Daughters* (1964), generational discord is explored in the choice of profession, where the protagonist, James Ofosu, feels that it is his responsibility to choose the profession for his children. This is met with refusal by two of his children, Aaron and Maanan. The ensuing tension is later resolved by James' realisation of his folly. Wole Soyinka's *Dance of the Forests* (1963) is an allegory that explores the relationship of spiritual beings with physical beings in a bid to warn a newly-independent Nigeria to desist from glorifying her past. Through the characters of Rola, Obaneji, Demoke, amongst others, the playwright creatively pushes forward the lesson that gods and people are not linked by any glorious past but by corruptible guilt. At last, hope is symbolised in the half-child of the dead woman.

Michale Dei-Anang's *Okomfo Anokye's Golden Stool: A Play in Three Acts* (1963) recounts the story of the Akan priest, Okomfo Anokye, who appeals to the gods for a golden stool. The play incorporates folklore and folk heroism. A close examination of the play reveals that the traditional use of dancing and drumming reveals timeless possibilities. The historical play is a dramatisation of a tale and legend.

Efua Sutherlands's *Edufa* (1967) is a play that explores the tension between the traditional and the modern, at the dawn of a new era in many newly independent African countries. In J.P Clark's 'Song of a Goat' (1961), published in his book, *Three Plays* (1964), the theme of incest is explored with much sensitivity. Zifa sends his wife, Ebiere, to a Masseur for a cure for her supposed barrenness. The wife divulged the secret about her husband's impotence to the Masseur, who suggested

that an approved ceremonial coupling with Zifa's brother, Tonye, would solve the issue, which she and Zifa rejected. But eventually, out of frustration, Ebiere seduces her brother-in-law. Zifa's discovery of her infidelity led to a string of avoidable deaths in the family.
J.P Clark's *Raft* is a one-act play about four men – Olutu, Kengide, Ogro, and Ibobo – as they are borne adrift on the sea, hanging onto a raft. With the use of rich symbolism, the playwright incorporates the themes of homosexuality, Catholicism, betrayal of politicians, and labour strikes, as the four men drift on the River Niger journeying towards their death. His play, *Ozidi* (1966), is based on Ijaw traditional experience, accompanied by music, dance, and miming, spanning seven days period of narration. The play begins in a form typical of the folktale traditional style of narration, with the spectators sitting on the floor in a semicircle. The tale is told in a bare setting. The play begins, giving a ritualistic picture in which, the audience is invited to participate. The play is a traditional prototype, with popular myth undergoing a dramatic transformation.

Two other plays worth mentioning are the Cameroonian Guillaume Oyono-Mbia's *Trois Pretendants: Un Mari* (Three Suitors: One Husband, 1962) and his *Jusqu'à Nouvel Avis* (Until Further Notice, 1970). In the first play, events are mixed with humour to exude laughter from the audience. Oyono-Mbia pitched a family's taboos and superstitions with the conflict that ensued with new choices and freedom. In the second play, the playwright explores the tension between tradition and civilisation, village life and modern city. While the play advises that we try to embrace the good in the new ways, it insists we must not forget our roots.

Indeed, African dramatists have continued to strive to restore the truths of life with minimal rancour. Plays are better dramatised by externalising spiritual conflict. African drama should not be too involved with the rubrics of Western stage craft. It should, instead, restore total indigenous African theatre, while enhancing it with positive aspects of the western mode, in order to achieve a theatre that is more rewarding and realistic.

SELF ASSESMENT EXERCISE

Summarise the beginning of African drama.

3.2 Yoruba Popular Drama

In the development of Yourba stage and ritual drama, the first to be mentioned is Hubert Ogunde, who founded in 1945, the African Music

Research Party, the first professional theatrical company in the country. In 1947, the company changed its name to Ogunde Theatre Party, and in 1950, to Ogunde Concert Party. He had more than thirty operas, out of which four has been published. Most of his themes are based on the teachings of the bible, but he later expanded his themes to include issues of contemporary relevance, with a beautiful introduction of songs, dance, music, and dialogue in stage plays. One of his plays, *Yoruba Ronu* (Yoruba, embrace wisdom/Yoruba, be wise) (1964), satirises the conflict of the 1960's among the Yoruba. Though the play was banned in Western Nigeria, it received much success in other parts of Nigeria. He used both traditional drums and Western instruments in his plays, incorporating political and social-economic themes.

Kolawole Ogunmola (1925 – 1973) was a dramatist, actor, and playwright. In 1948, he founded the Ogunmola Travelling Theatre, which staged many plays rich in Yoruba and Christian symbols, including Amos Tutuola's *The Palmwine Drinkard*. Through a combination of the use of the drum and Yoruba sons, he satirises socio-political issues in his society. His play, *Ife Owo* ((Love of Money) (1965) satirises marriage and wealth. He also produced the play, *Agbara j' Agbara* (The Reign of the Might) in Ibadan in 1962.

Duro Ladipo (1931 – 1978) is another popular Yoruba dramatist, writer, producer, and playwright, who co-founded with the German scholar Ulli Beier, in the 1960s, the Mbari Mbayo Club, a haven for literary artists and their activities. His plays celebrate Yoruba culture and beliefs, and also make an attempt at a fusion between the Yoruba traditional beliefs and the Christian religion. His popular plays include *Ajagun Nla, Oba Moro* (Ghost Catcher King), and *Oba Waja* (The King is Dead). To date, his most popular play is *Oba Koso* (The King did not Hang), which has received positive reviews nationally and internationally. The play discusses a war monger Yoruba king who could not control his generals when his people advised him in the interest of peace. Apparently disappointed, he went on exile and then hung himself, to the disbelief of all. At last, he is worshipped as a god or deity. These plays were later published as *Three Yourba Plays* (1967), edited by Ulli Beier.

Ulli Beier (1922 – 2011), the German scholar, writer, artist, translator, and cultural activist, contributed significantly to the development of Nigerian, and Yoruba literary arts. He founded the first literary magazine in English, *Black Orpheus*, a literary platform that gave many Nigeria and African writers a space to showcase their literary works to the world. Among his scholarly works is the book he wrote, *The Imprisonment of Obatala and Other Plays* (1966), using the pseudonym, Obotunde Ijimere. The plays in the book are three: 'The Imprisonment of Obatala'; 'Everyman'; and 'Woyengi'. 'Everyman' was performed by

Duro Ladipo and his theatre group in Nigeria and Europe in the '60s. 'Woyengi', a play based on Ijaw myth, was first performed by the students of the Department of Drama, University of Ibadan, in 1965.

Wale Ogunyemi (1939 – 2001), actor, writer, dramatist, and playwright. He plays include *Ààre, Akogun* (1969); *Be Mighty Be Mine* (1968); *The Divorce* (1977); *Eniyan: A Morality Play* (1987); *Eshu Elegbara* (1970); and *Langbodo* (1979). His first play, ***Business Headache*** (1966), rendered in pidgin, was written while working with a drama group he helped to form in 1965, Theatre Express. It was published in Ulli Beier's *Three Nigerian Plays*. Ogunyemi adapted Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, and it was performed in 1969. He also produced plays for the radio and television.

Olawale Gladstone Emmanuel Rotimi, fondly known as Ola Rotimi (1938 – 2000), was a versatile artist, playwright, dramatist, actor, and dancer. While teaching at the Obafemi Awolowo University, he founded a theatre group, the Ori Olokun Acting Company. His plays include *To Stir the God of Iron* (1963); *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* (1966); *The Gods Are Not To Blame* (1968); *Kurunmi* (1969); *Ovonramven Nogbaisi* 1971); *Hopes of the Living Dead* (1985), among so many others. have political themes and are infused with the rich imagery of Yoruba and Ijaw cultures. He is well known for his adaption of the Oedipus legend in *The Gods Are Not To Blame* (1971), which was performed at the Ife Festival of Arts in 1968. Marking a break from Yoruba traditional theatre, the play revolves around Odewale's destiny and the will of the gods, with Odewale's birth and growth shrouded in mystery. Unknowingly, the protagonist killed his father, King Adetusa, and married his own mother, abominable actions that inflicted a curse on the land. When the revelations were made at last, Odewale gauged out his own eyes and left the kingdom. The mystery of the hero's journey through life is obvious as the gods ordered his death at birth. The priests of Ogun instructed that he be taken out of the town but Gbonka, the king's messenger, spared his life, and the repercussions of this action gradually unfolded in the play. Ola Rotimi's play may be a version of the Oedipus legend, but he owned it and made it uniquely Nigerian through the literary infusion of Yoruba proverbs, songs, dance, and drumming, in fulfillment of the people's oral tradition.

A relationship exists between staged theatre and unwritten indigenous drama. Some plays may use traditional songs and dance, proverbs, and vernacular language. Such plays often revolve around the protagonist's attitude to social practices and traditional beliefs. An example is Wole Soyinka's play, *Madmen and Specialists* (1971), where the hero rejects things of tradition. James Ene Henshaw's *This is Our Chance* (1956), a collection of short plays, reveals traditional beliefs and mores, but

aspires towards Western values. Chief Damba symbolises tradition, the sacred. He realises that some of his beliefs are wrong, but not so convincing. Many of the Nigerian plays pose the problem of the powerlessness of tradition, while giving articulation to the younger and contemporary generation. The older generation is usually made to look rigid in the face of change, holding on tightly to a tradition that is fast losing its relevance. However, in Ogali O. Ogali's *Veronica My Daughter* (1956), the problem of bride price restrained Chief Jombo from granting his daughter's desire when it became obvious that he cannot get more than the government-approved thirty pounds from Michael, whom Veronica prefers to marry. His own choice for her, Chief Bassey, was willing to part with two hundred pounds if Veronica agrees to marry him. But in the end, he allows Veronica to marry her choice, signifying the triumph of the new over the old.

Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* (1962) also explores the strain between the fading old life and a new way of life. The beautiful Sidi marries the local chief Baroka (tradition) and rejects the school teacher, Lakunle (Western), showing the playwright's strong leaning on culture and tradition, as is alos reflected in another of his play, *The Strong Breed* (1964) in which the hero, Emen, willingly gave up his life for the benefit of his community.

4.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have discussed the beginning of African drama in French and English, and also looked at some Yoruba popular drama, and the writers and creators behind a number of popular plays we are familiar with.

5.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Read and answer the questions below:

a. Discuss what interest you in Dahomean drama.
b. Summarise Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not To Blame.*

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MODULE 3 HISTORY AND FEMINISM

UNIT 1 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF FEMINISM

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit has been designed to take you through the history of feminism. It includes the early forms of feminism as spelt out in the three different waves of the feminist movements.

Below are the Learning Outcomes of this unit:

2.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- trace the history of feminism from a general perspective
- discuss the main concern(s) of the first wave of feminism
- identify the features that make up the second wave of feminism
- discuss the tenets of the third wave of feminism
- differentiate between the three waves of feminism.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 History of Feminism

Feminism is a term that highlights the gender relations between men and women in a given society. The social system in many societies is patriarchy, a system that upholds the dignity of the male sex over the female sex. As a result of this, the belief/value system, state structures and institutions promote the male sex over the female sex. Therefore, gender relations are built on a superior/inferior, weak/strong, negative/positive social dichotomy, which privilege men over women. Generally, feminists are of the opinion that women's position in society has been structured to the advantage of men and the detriment of women in all spheres of life. Feminism brings up all these in order to make people aware of the ills, and work towards a change that will make society equitable.

The history of feminist movements is usually grouped into three waves of protest. These 'waves' represent the period the particular brand of feminism started and more importantly, the ideologies, values, goals, and strategies each of the waves represent. Particular feminists were very present in these periods, pushing forward the philosophy of the emancipation of women. It is important to note that in spite of the 'radical' arm of feminism, the ideology itself is not against men, nor is it calling for a new world order peopled by only women. It is not asking for a replacement of patriarchy with matriarchy. Its consistent call is for equality and equity for both sexes.

3.2 First Wave of Feminism

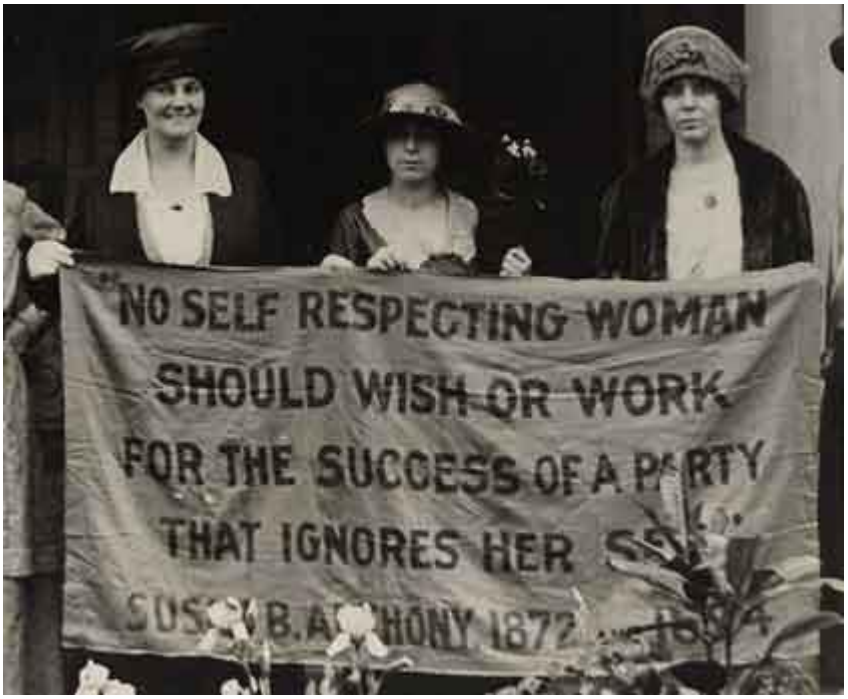
There are many versions pertaining to when feminism started. To understand it better, the history of feminism is always explained in terms of waves or periods, with each reflecting specific highlights that make it different from the rest. The First Wave of feminism, which is regarded as the period of its inception, started in 1848, when about three hundred women and men came together at Seneca Falls, New York, to call for equal rights for both sexes. This gathering is referred to as the Seneca Falls Convention, and a Seneca Falls Declaration was drafted by Elizabeth Cady Stanton. This document encapsulates the new movement's ideologies, statutes, and strategies.

These middle-class white women, mainly in the USA and then in Europe, pushed for many rights for women, chief among which is the right for women to vote. They also pressed for and carried out protests

and demonstrations, acts that shocked many, as these were deemed 'unwomanly', for the rights of women to education, reproductive rights, better working conditions for the few women in the public space, a review of marriage and property laws to be more favourable to women, to mention a few.

This period was also rife with the civil rights movements and abolitionist activities. Black women abolitionists joined the feminist struggles to include the rights of black women. Prominent among these black abolitionists were Sojourner Truth (1797 – 1883), Maria Stewart (1803 – 1879), and Frances E. Harper (1825 – 1911).

A group of First Wave Feminists in America, carrying placards in support of women and the right to vote. (Photo Credit: Muhammed Shahid, medium.com)



More protests calling for the right of women to vote (Photo Credit: app.emaze.com)

3.3 Second Wave Feminism

This wave of protest started from the 1960s through to the 1990s. It was more active, more demanding, and more persistent than the earlier one. Feminists of this era opened up the meaning of women to include radicals, blacks, women from Third World countries, and homosexuals. These women brought to the public sphere a larger number of gender-based violence perpetrated against women, which included marital rape, domestic abuse, cultural inequalities, and inequalities in the laws. Second Wave Feminism was broad in its membership, welcoming into its fold radical voices and differential rights to cater for the minority groups within their midst. They called for the sexual and reproductive rights of women, and asked that abortion and birth control should be legalised. Many of their protest in America were also against the commodification of women as sexual objects, and in 1968 and 1969, they spoke vehemently against the Miss America beauty pageant. They also pushed to pass a bill of the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution, a bill that, if passed, would guarantee the social equality of both men and women.

They promoted unity in diversity among women and terms like womanhood and sisterhood were readily used among them. They also extolled the nurturing and caring nature of women, and they created the term, ‘ecofeminism’, to show the close alignment of women to Mother Earth. They also gave the clarification between sex and gender, insisting

that sex is biological, while gender is socially constructed. They created the popular sayings ‘Women’s struggle is class struggle’, and ‘The personal is political’.

Through their activities, many universities and higher institutions all over the world today offer courses and degrees in Gender Studies, Women Studies, Masculinities, among others.

Second Wave Feminism include women of diverse races and cultures (Photo Credit: liberationschool.org).

Women’s Strike for Peace-And Equality, Women’s Strike for Equality, Fifth Avenue, New York, New York, August 26, 1970. (Photo by Eugene Gordon/The New York Historical Society/Getty Images).

3.4 Third Wave Feminism

The Third Wave emerged during the 1990s to the present, even though some have claimed that feminism is in its fourth wave. It is a continuation of the Second Wave Feminism, even though it criticised a number of its postulations. One of these is the notion of universal womanhood. Feminists in the post-colonial era of those times rejected the notion that all women are sisters and share the same experiences in patriarchal society. They also rejected the Second Wave feminists' views about gender, the woman's body, and sexuality. They instead readily pushed forward notions of diversity, ambiguity, multiplicity, and difference. Along this line, they promoted nuances of experimentation and creativity in gender and sexuality. It was their own way of breaking fixations in meanings and language related to power and social structures. Many of their members are homosexuals and transgender.

They also criticised the media for their use of language in the portrayal of women, and called for a more realistic one.

(Photo Credit: https://www.viewpointmag.com/2018/12/03/from-womens-strikes-to-a-new-class-movement-the-third-feminist-wave/)

Feminism public attention to the conspicuous inequality between men and women, and patriarchal society's reluctance to make institutions and structures more open, flexible, and equitable, especially in gender relations.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Differentiate between the first, second, and third waves of feminism.

4.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have discussed the history of feminism, with emphasis on the three waves of protest that define the feminist ideology.

We have also gone back to the mid-19th century, through the 20th century, and to the present to discuss the ideology known as feminism. We have looked at the different 'waves' of protest and the particular features that make them different from one another.

5.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What are the notions of the Second Wave Feminism that the Third Wave Feminism is against?
2. Discuss the injustices against women that the three waves of feminism challenge.

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UNIT 2 FEMINIST EXPRESSIONS

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit attempts to discuss a specific number of feminist expressions, taken from the different ones there are. The Learning Outcomes of this unit are enumerated below:

2.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- identify the different categories of feminism
- explain the specific types there are in the categories of feminism
- discuss the major stance of feminism generally.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Feminist Expressions in Literature

Feminism has a wide array of concepts and views reflecting the multiplicity of ideas from women in every part of the world. Since the mid-19th century, many theories and counter theories have been created, but all with the aim of creating a more equitable society where everyone is treated with a sense of fairness and justice.

There are between eight to ten broad categories of feminism, and these, based on their ideological leanings have been further grouped under three general categories, by Judith Lorber, the international scholar in gender studies, in her book, *The Variety of Feminisms* (1997). Below is a brief discussion of these different categories of feminism.

3.2 Gender Reform Feminisms

These feminisms thrived between the 1960s and 1970s, and actually started the second wave of feminism. They were greatly influenced by Marxist thoughts on individual rights, class consciousness, and capitalism. They were also hinged on anti-colonial sentiments and national development. Under this category, we have three types of feminisms: liberal feminism, Marxist and socialist feminism, and development feminism.

Liberal Feminism – This is based on the belief that there is no difference between men and women; that they are created equally. And as such, they should not be treated differently in the private and public spheres of life. For example, men and women should have equal rights and opportunities in education and labour. Liberal Feminism encourages the pulling down of dichotomies when it comes to abilities and capabilities. Therefore, men can pursue careers in nursing, teaching, catering, interior decoration, etc., while women should be encouraged to go into engineering, the sciences, and other careers that are mainly seen as male-oriented. Through the activities of liberal feminists, people started to see that women are not inferior to men. However, they have been criticised for being too conformist in their ideas and strategies.

Marxist and Socialist Feminism – This type of feminism places capitalism/private property system as the reason for gender discrimination against women. Using the general views of Marxism as their prop, Marxist and Socialist feminists critique state structures and patriarchal body of beliefs that relegate women and their work to the home. Women's work is not regarded as work, and because of this, is generally unpaid. A woman's sense of selfhood, therefore, is tied up with the home – her husband and children. Marxist and Socialist feminism sees the family as a site of discrimination against women because it encourages their invisibility and annihilation in favour of their husbands and fathers. Even in cases and places where women work, they are generally less paid than the men. A recent example of this gendered wage disparity or salary discrimination was seen in the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). Due to lodged complaints from many of the corporation's female staff, the Equality and Human Rights Commission investigated these claims, going through the financial

records as far back as 2016, and discovered that male presenters and stars were paid much higher than their female counterparts. For example, in the BBC's 2016/2017 annual report, the British star, Chris Evans was paid between £2.2m and £2.25m in 2016/2017, while Claudia Winkleman was the highest-paid female celebrity, earning between £450,000 and £500,000 (BBC News, 29 June, 2018). Marxist and Liberal Feminists, therefore, agitate for equal pay for women and a complete overhaul of the prevailing economic system.

Development Feminism – This type of feminism focuses on the economic empowerment of women in postcolonial settings, observing that colonialism in many African countries restricted the number of ways women can earn income, by the division of labour along gender lines. The labour women engaged in was mostly at the subsistence level and the little they earn is plugged back into the running of the home. This economic exploitation of women continued in a post-colonial Africa, with many economic opportunities opening up for men. Development feminists urge a situation where women would be in charge of not only food production but also its distribution. Tradition and cultural beliefs that disempower women economically should also be revisited.

There have been a number of critical questions against the types of gender reform feminisms we have looked at above. For example, are liberal feminists pushing for more women being admitted into male-dominated professions, or that whatever professions women are in, their pay should be commiserated with their male counterparts in the same professions? Marxist/Socialist feminists blame the disempowerment of women on patriarchal family setting, pushing for the state to remunerate full time housewives for their labour. However, this position puts women fully into the power of the state, which is in the hands of men. The state can decide at will, for economic reasons, to stop the remuneration to women, thereby leaving women in a worse position. For development feminists, their major challenge is the presence of cultural practices and traditions which put women and girl children under the total control of men.

3.3 Gender Resistant Feminisms

The efforts of the earlier feminists yielded much fruits – more women were admitted into male professions, and more women pursued courses in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) courses, and generally the lot of women was better. But this was as far as it was. Women realised that much has changed. They were still regarded as second-class citizens, and many gendered myths and beliefs

still held sway. It was as if patriarchy was having a good laugh at their expense! There was no equality, nor was there equity in the work force, in the home, in the society. This situation generated the rise of a fierier category of feminism – the resistant type. Under this category, we have the radical feminism, lesbian feminism, psychoanalytical feminism, and standpoint feminism.

Radical Feminism – Radical feminists oppose everything male, and blame patriarchy and men for every negative thing that happens to women. Men, state structures, and institutions are responsible for the inferior status of women in all societies. The institution of the family oppresses women, formal education does not improve women's state, men use physical force and violence to silence women, marriage is slavery, the media portray women as sexual objects and commodities, and both the private and public spaces dehumanise women. They therefore advocate for women only families and work force, and the destruction of anything that inhibits women's movement and dignity. For example, there were cases in the past where radical feminists gathered together to publicly set on fire pants and bras, which they felt men designed to make women uncomfortable. Through their efforts, rape centres, battered women's homes and clinics, female desks at police stations, hospitals that cater only for women, crèches, etc. were created. Prostitution, pornography, rape and murder are some of the atrocities men commit against women. To radical feminists, man is the enemy, and women should separate from them.

Lesbian Feminism – Many of the feminists in the radical group discussed above easily fall into the lesbian feminists' type because they share similar views and ideas. Only that the latter group takes it a step further – they reject everything male, and encourage relationships, including sexual, that are women only.

Psychoanalytical Feminism - This branch of feminism came into existence through a feminist reading and interpretation of the writings of major psychoanalysts like Sigmund Freud (1905; 2016), Jacques Lacan (1958; 2006), Michel Foucault (1978). Their writings revolve around the sexuality of boys and girls, which are formed from childhood. Freud, for example, talks about boys' fear of the loss of the phallus, and girls' penis or phallus envy. Because of these emotional exhibitions, both sexes put up strategies to deal with resolving it. For the boys, a major reason for the fear they nurse about losing their phallus (that is, masculinity) is their closeness to their mothers, and to deal with this, they deliberately separate from their mothers by surrounding themselves with a cloak of masculinity that affects their relationship and their lifestyle. For girls, because they crave for the power which the phallus gives to boys, and since they do not have it, they long for emotional

closeness with boys and they also long to give birth to boys, in order to experience a semblance of this masculine power. These generally are the summations of male psychoanalysts on human sexuality.

But, to counter this, French psychoanalytical feminists have called for a celebration of womanhood and motherhood. They have asked women to write, sing, and produce literary works that bring to the limelight women's biological experiences of, for example, menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, menopause, amongst others. By so doing, women will find fulfillment in their own selves, and also resist a patriarchal culture that is filled with images of the phallic – aggression, violence, domination, to mention a few.

Standpoint Feminism – This type of feminism challenges the production of knowledge, its producers, and the knowledge itself. Its main criticism is against Western Science and Social Science which have produced fallacious and negative knowledge about women's mental and biological abilities and capabilities. It calls for methodologies that are women-centric, promotion of feminist research, and bringing up of women's voices from 'the silent room' into the public arena.

Again, just like we saw in the Gender Reform Feminisms, there are also a number of criticisms against the types of feminisms under the Gender Resistant Feminisms. For radical feminism, the major criticism against it has been its failure to recognise and acknowledge the classes that exist in that generic term, 'women', thereby believing that all classes of women are monolithic and go through the same disempowering experiences in their different patriarchal communities. Social classes exist among women based on race and religion particularly. Radical feminism, by its stance, has also foreclosed the existence of other social classes that exist among men and women. For lesbian feminism, its adherents have remained undecided about the presence of bisexual feminists in their midst. How do they address this category of women? Psychoanalytic feminists' stance on the celebration of womanhood further divides the line between men and women, and makes the difference more glaring and separated. Standpoint feminists' insistence on women producing knowledge does not in any way make the knowledge true and factual.

3.4 Gender Revolution Feminisms

This category of feminism criticises the patriarchal order that privileges a group of men over, above and against women generally and men on the lower rungs of the social order. In line with this, it also critiques the

cultural beliefs and practices, and the mass media for the institutionalisation of a dominant order in all spheres. This category of feminism is made up of multi-ethnic feminism, men's feminism, social construction feminism, post-modern feminism and queer theory.

Multi-Ethnic Feminism - This feminism encourages one to see disempowerment from multiple angles, and that the experience is not only unique to women. It is multi-faceted and sometimes complex. Women are not only disempowered by men – both in the upper and subordinate classes, they are also discriminated against by fellow women – based on race, ethnicity, economic, religious, and political factors. Likewise, men are also discriminated against by fellow men based on some of the factors earlier mentioned. What is important to multi-ethnic feminists is that women experience disempowerment from a number of angles. They also believe that the cultural products women produce are emotionally expressive, just as the dominant males' creative productions also reflect their values and lifestyles.

Men's Feminism – This seeks to bring men into the centre of attention. It is call all that men are discriminated against too – by other men. It not only talks about the diversity of men, but also the differences inherent in this diversity. It criticises hegemonic masculinity which defines manhood as being working class, middle class, white, successful, and heterosexual. It also criticises traditional male bonding as sites that encourage physical aggression against 'weak' men and women. Other sites include organised sports, the military, heterosexual family structure, fraternities, amongst others. It makes particular case for homosexual who are generally discriminated against by heterosexual patriarchy.

Social Construction Feminism – The feminists in this group link women's low status in the society to gender, which they see as the pedestal on which society is built on. To them, gender permeates every aspect of life, dictating to all prescribed rules and regulations to pattern their lives on. A major part and strategy of gender is inequality, and this is used to justify the unequal relations that exist between men and women. Gender as a social order is all pervasive that people no longer see it as a social construction, but as natural and biological. Therefore, everything and every action, role and responsibility is gendered – there is gendered division of labour in the home, in the work force, in sports, in education, in politics, in economics, in sexuality, religion, law, medicine, in expected behaviour and appearance for men and women, boys and girls. Gender therefore, exerts power and control over all. To change the prevailing status quo, social construction feminists call for conscious and deliberate actions from both individuals and institutions.

Postmodern Feminism and Queer Theory – These two feminist types challenge the generally accepted notion that gender is fixed and dual, insisting that there are many sexualities, different from the dual heterosexual gendered ones. They also believe that cultural texts have imbued in them gendered views and beliefs which the readers and audience accept unconsciously and allow to influence what they believe and accept. For example, a soap opera on television showing a man, his wife and children further promote the view that heterosexuality is the norm: the man is the head, and the wife and children are there to serve the needs of the man. These cultural productions influence our view about gender and sexuality, and make us reject other types that are contrary to it. For queer theorists, the norm should extend between mainstream ideas of who is male or female, and take on other ways, for instance, cross dressing.

Generally, gender revolution feminists challenge the culture of binary oppositions as seen in language, behaviour, professions, family, appearance, sexuality, to mention a few. They call for a broadening of the discourse to include other types and categories.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. What is feminism?
2. Identify the categories of feminisms there are?

4.0 SUMMARY

In this Unit, we have given a general definition of feminism with its different categories and types. This types all project different views and stances, which all add up to make feminism a robust and engaging discourse.

In this unit, you have learnt the following:

- General definitions of Feminism;
- Gender Reform Feminisms;
- Gender Resistant Feminisms;
- Gender Revolution Feminisms;
- The specific criticisms against each category.

5.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Attempt the following questions:

i. Under which category do we have the liberal feminism?
ii. This category of feminisms frowns against social binary opposition stance?
iii. What do you think are the principal tenets of feminism?

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UNIT 3 FEMINISM AND THE AFRICAN EXPERIENCE (I)

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

We have written this unit to discuss the African experience of feminism. Over time, feminism became broad-based, with many women and men adopting the ideology and also challenging some of its precepts, like the notion of universal womanhood. African feminists adopted feminism to reflect the values and beliefs that uphold women. Even within the ambit of African feminism, there are different ideologies and types. Some of these are Motherism, Stiwanism, Womanism, Nego-feminism, Snail-Sense Womanism, and Femino-Porcupine. In this unit, we shall discuss the first three types of African Feminism, and reserve the remaining four for Unit 4. Below are the Learning Outcomes of this unit:

2.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss how Africans adopted feminism to their own experience
- explain the social institution of patriarchy and women's disempowerment
- make a comparison the plight of Nigerian women with those other women from Africa.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Feminism and the African Woman's Experience

The marginalisation and disempowerment of women are realities in the contemporary world, including Africa. Women as victims of patriarchal oppression is no longer new in Africa's literary discourse, as seen the creative and critical wrings of women and men across all the genres.

During the colonial and post-colonial eras, many African women writers have brought to the fore the disempowering experiences of many women who were not only discriminated against by the white colonialists, but also by their own men who have been conditioned to see women as inferior to them. African writers like Flora Nwapa, Mariama Ba, Molara Ogundipe-Leslie, Adaura Ulaosi, Ama Ata Aidoo, Adimora Akachi Ezeigbo, Okonjo Ogunyemi, Yetunde Akorede, Sefi Atta, Bessie Head, Mary Ebun Kolawole, Zaynab Alkali, and Ifeoma Okoye have through their writings particularly reveal women's exploitation and patriarchal oppression of various degrees.

When the white colonialists arrived Africa with their Victorian morality, they met in place a similar patriarchal structure that promotes the man at the expense of women. Women were to be seen, not heard, and this informs some of the policies they put in place, for instance, formal education. African men were educated in schools and sent abroad for their university education which they put to good use at nation building. Women were much later allowed to go to school, but to learn nurturing subjects in catering, teaching, and nursing.

Through education and enlightment, African women started to question some of these injustices, and with the ideology of feminism, they started to write against it and raise people's consciousness about it. Knowing that women's experiences of patriarchy differ, African women were able to create feminisms that reflect their unique experiences, and use this as a tool to demand for a change that is equitable to both sexes.
The African woman's response to feminism finds an echo with other black women's response. They were able to adapt it to their particular experiences of marginalisation and inequality, and formulate theories and concepts to address the gendered ills. These theories also provide the necessary tools and strategies for self-rediscovery, emancipation and actualisation from every form of injustice and subjugation.

The African society has never been equal in terms of gender relations. African belief systems and cultural traditions favour boys and men being at the helm of affairs in both the private and public spheres. This plays

out in male preference, early marriage/motherhood of girls, restricted formal education, restricted leadership positions, amongst other ills. These contribute to give women a low status and low self-esteem, which play out in demeaning ways. African widows are without widowhood rights. The people's culture does not accord widows, female divorcees or single parents any rights or respect or sympathy.

From whichever perspective it may be viewed, the African woman is a burden. African feminists are working hard at creating a more equitable society where everyone, boy and girl, man and woman, is open to equal opportunities and possibilities.

3.2 Motherism

This African feminism typed was formulated by Catherine Obianuju Acholonu in her book, *Motherism – An Afrocentric Alternative to Feminism* (1995). In it, she calls for caution in African women's acceptance of the core tenets of Western feminism, which are mostly contrary to African values. She discusses the importance of motherhood, nurture, respect and care of African women, insisting that these are part of African womanhood which should be considered before going overboard in our dealings with gender relations and with the Western value of individualism. Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) is contrary to this concept, while Abubakar Gimba's *Sacred Apples* (1994) reflects the motherism concept, especially in the dilemma working class mothers face between their family and their careers.

Catherine O. Acholonu, 1951 – 2014. (Photo Credit: American Archive of Public Broadcasting)

3.3 Stiwanism

This is another variant of African feminism originated by the Nigerian poet and literary critic, Molara Ogundipe-Leslie. The word originated from the acronym, STIWA, meaning Social Transformation Including Women in Africa. This concept addresses Western feminist discourse exclusion of African women in transforming their men, and developmental issues. She advocates men and women working together as partners, with one sex not claiming to be superior or inferior to the other. Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's novels, *Children of the Eagle* (2002) and *House of Symbols* (2005) reflect the tenets of Stiwanism.

Molara Ogundipe-Leslie, 1940 – 2019. (Photo Credit: WordPress.com)

3.4 Womanism

The theory of womanism was both created by two 'women of colour', from two different continents, but at the same period – the 1980s. These women are the American-based Nigerian writer, Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi, and the African-American novelist and literary critic, Alice Walker. While both women look at women from their respective countries, their views are similar – the disempowerment of the dark-skinned woman – African/African-American – by not only men and social institutions, but also by middle class white feminists. The two exponents both highlight the similar experiences of black women: racism, sexism, caste system, among others. To Ogunyemi, womanism is the feminism for African women. It is neither antagonist nor men-hating; neither is it radical or lesbian. Instead, it addresses the inequality between the sexes and seeks for ways of convincing men to be more proactive towards women.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What differences are there between the two proponents of Womanism?

4.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have looked at three types of African feminism, mainly propounded by Nigerian women: Motherism, Stiwanism, and Womanism. Interestingly, the third type is propounded separately by two black women – one an African, and the other an African-American. We have discussed the major views of these African feminisms and how they relate to African women particularly.

In this unit, you have also learnt three types of African feminism:

- Motherism
- Stiwanism
- Womanism

5.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss your understanding of African experience of feminism.

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UNIT 4 FEMINISM AND THE AFRICAN EXPERIENCE (II)

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding Unit, we discussed three types of African feminism: Motherism, Stiwanism, and Womanism. When we say 'African' feminism, we mean the proponents are African women or women of African descent, like African-Americans. This Unit will look at the remaining types of African feminism there are. They are also three: Nego-feminism, Snail-sense womanism, and Femino-porcupine womanism.

2.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- be familiar with the other types of African feminism that are not so popular
- be able to identify the major differences among the three types
- be able to discuss the particular experiences that gave rise to the creation of the types of African feminism.

3.1 Nego-Feminism

This brand of African feminism was coined by the Nigerian feminist scholar, Obioma Nnaemeka, in her 2004 academic paper titled, 'Nego-Feminism: Theorising, Practicing, and Pruning Africa's Way'. She describes the term as firstly:

> …the feminism of negotiation; second nego-feminism stands for "no ego" feminism. In the foundation of shared values in many African cultures are the principles of negotiation, give and take, compromise and balance (2004:377).

In this type of feminism, the African woman confronts patriarchal injustice and oppression through the tools and skills of conflict negotiation, wisdom, patience, tolerance, conflict management, collaboration, among others. Through these actions, she eventually achieves what she wants, even if they are a long time in coming. To Nnaemeka, feminism to the African woman does not disrupt nor cause discord: "African feminism is not reactive; it is proactive" (377). In other words, African women's sense of family play a significant part in the decisions they make when they are confronted with patriarchal injustice.

A good example of this strand of feminism is found in the character of Ije, in Ifeoma Okoye's *Behind the Clouds*, who was not confrontational in her response to her husband's action in taking another wife when she could not conceive.

Obioma Nnaemeka (Photo Credit: Department of Africana Studies, University of Maryland, Baltimore County)

3.2 Snail-Sense Feminism

This theory was propounded by the feminist writer, novelist, and scholar, Akachi Adimora Ezeigbo, where she observes that African women's brand of feminism is not confrontational but sensible, a type of stooping to conquer. Using the symbol of a snail to further highlight

what African women should adopt in their relationship with men in a patriarchal society, she identifies some of the attributes of a snail to include resilience, hard work, wisdom, sensitivity, patience, and doggedness. With these attributes, a snail traverses life, slow and steady, but eventually getting to its destination. So too should women do; they should confront life's challenges and difficulties with patience and wisdom, and just like the snail uses its tongue to first assess a challenge on its way, the woman too should not be confrontational in her response to gendered challenges. Rather, through dialogue, negotiation, and patience, she would achieve her desired goals.

In a way, the snail-sense feminism shares some similarities with nego-feminsm, the only difference being that there is more emphasis placed on the self-actualisation of the woman in the former type of feminism. Just like a snail makes a lone journey in order to reach its destination, the woman too should work hard to achieve her goals before she can now seek to help others achieve theirs.

In the face of danger, a snail withdraws into its shell and takes its time before coming out to resume its journey. The African woman too should be strategic, conciliatory, cautious, and wise in the face of patriarchal oppression and injustice.

Akachi Adimora Ezeigbo sums it up this way:

> *They (that is, women) should often adopt conciliatory or cooperative attitude towards men. This is akin to what the snail does with the environment in which it moves and exists. … The snail carries its house on its back without feeling the strain. It goes wherever it wishes in this manner and arrives at its destination intact. If danger looms, it withdraws into its shell and is safe. This is what women often do in our society to survive in Nigeria's harsh patriarchal culture. It is this tendency to accommodate or tolerate the male and cooperate with men that informs this theory which I call snail-sense feminism. (2012:27).*

The protagonists, Adah, in Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* and Nneoma in Akachi Adimora Ezeigbo's *Trafickked* are ready examples of snail sense feminism.

Adimora Akachi Ezeigbo (Photo Credit: Geosi Reads – WordPress.com)

3.3 Femalism

This feminist theory was founded by the Nigerian feminist scholar, Chioma Opara. It is a theory that again, just like the snail-sense feminism of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo, departs sharply from Western feminism, insisting on analysing the particular experiences of Nigerian/African women, from an angle that is inherently African and gendered, as distinct from women and their experiences in Europe, for example.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines femalism as "the condition, quality, or nature of being a female." Opara's theory of femalism extends this specifically to the woman's body as a site of patriarchal acts of oppression, violence, injustice, exploitation, to mention a few. She compares the woman's body and experience to Mother Nature and to Africa, which have become sites of colonial presence, abuse, and exploitation. Therefore, women's freedom from these patriarchal abuses can also be extended to the freedom of the African continent from the effects of colonialism. Femalism, therefore, analyses the efforts women are making to extricate themselves from these ills, thereby creating an empowering space and site for themselves.

According to Opara (2005: 190), through femalism,

the female body as well as mothering will constitute the systemic site of discourse and hermeneutics. Parallels will be drawn between the lacerated female body and the mutilated African nation jostled by wars, poverty, disease, colonialism, and post coloniality. Simply put, the feminized African country evokes Mother Earth, Woman Earth--an abstract projection of the African female body. The scarred body not only aligns with the spiritual in the representation of the natural and the cosmic but also manifests the dents of a scrambled and ailing nation.

The earth is usually referred to in feminine terms, and specifically addressed as 'Mother Earth'. By extension, therefore, the ills and abuses meted to Mother Earth, the woman's body has also borne.

The theory of femalism can be applied to many works of fiction where the female characters confront patriarchal stereotypes and people, and fight their way out of it, but without really rocking the boat. In other words, women do not jettison living within a patriarchal society. They create their own space and face the challenges headlong.

Examples of femalism can be found in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*, and Flora Nwapa's *One is Enough*.

Chioma Opara (Photo Credit: Gistmeust.com, Rsust Online Community)

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Are there any differences between Ezeigbo's snail-sense feminism and Opara's femalism?

4.0 SUMMARY

We have looked at the different strands of African feminism, majority of them propounded by Nigerian female scholars. While the overall thrust is the emancipation of the African woman, the theories display particular features that make them different from one another.

In this unit, you have learnt the African and general experience of feminism:

- Motherism
- Stiwanism
- Womanism
- Nego-feminism
- Snail-sense womanism
- Femalism

5.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

How will you define African feminism?

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MODULE 4 WOMEN, GENDER, AND THE FEMINIST QUESTION

UNIT 1 WOMAN AT THE CENTRE IN SELECTED AFRICAN FICTION

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit, we will discuss a number of experiences of the African woman in patriarchal settings, and the different responses and strategies they adopted as survival mechanisms, particularly in their relationships with fellow women. Why do women see the other as a rival, and in what contexts do this happen? To analyse the common patriarchal myth that women are their own worst enemies, we will be looking at Cyprian Ekwensis's *Jagua Nana* (1961); Asare Konadu's *A Woman in Her Prime* (1967); Ifeoma Okoye's *Behind the Clouds* (1982); Isidore Okpewho's *The Victims* (1970); Mariama Ba's *So Long a Lettter* (1980); and Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* (1966) and *One is Enough* (1968), and how they were able to traverse the sometimes complex challenges in their relationship with one another.

2.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- identify the various patriarchal challenges women experience in their respective environments

- explore the general belief that women do not like one another
- discuss the various coping/survival mechanisms put up by women
- ascertain the realistic portrayal of women in male-authored novels and female-authored novels.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Contexts that Promote Enmity Among Women

Women find themselves in particular patriarchal contexts that encourage them to distrust one another, particularly when the bone of contention is a man. One of the most common contexts is polygamous marriages. Co-wives see one another contesting for the love and affection of a man, and in certain cases, they go out of their way to eliminate the other. Many African novels portray co-wife rivalry in their plots and the lessons learnt. For instance, in Cyprian Ekwensis *Jagua Nana,* Jagua and Ma Nancy, both friends and professional prostitutes, engage in deceits and lies in order to outwit the other in search of male clients. Jagua tries to snatch the wealthy Syrian from her friend, just as both also vied for Freddie Namme's affection and attention. This eventually led to envy, jealousy, and bitter rivalry between the two. Ifeoma Okoye's *Behind The Clouds* (1982) explores the daughter- and mother-in-law relationship, over Ije, the female protagonist, inability to conceive. This leads to much bitterness from Ije's mother-in-law, who puts much pressure on her son, Dozie, to marry another wife.

In *The Victim,* Isidore Okpewho discusses the struggle among co-wives in a polygamous setting. Obanua, the husband, takes a wife after twelve years of marriage to the first wife, Nwabunoh. The latter's inability to have more than a child makes Obanua to marry Ogugua, who had earlier had twin girls, Ogo and Ndidi, to a Portuguese merchant. The conflict between Nwabunor and Ugugua begins when the senior wife refuses to concede the matrimonial bed to the second wife. This led to incessant quarrels with her co-wife, with disastrous consequences.

Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter* tells, in an epistolary form, the female condition in Islamic religion in Senegal. It reveals the story of Ramatoulaye, a woman abandoned by Modou Fall, her husband of thirty years, for a young girl, Binetou, her daughter's best friend. Five years later, Modou dies of heart attack, leaving behind twelve children for Ramoatulaye to cater for. During Iddah, the mandatory mourning period for widows, which spanned a four months and ten days, she writes to her childhood friend, Assatou, who had divorced her husband, Mawdo. The

semi-autobiographical novel not only reveals women's physical and emotional pains caused by fellow women, but also their determined efforts to will better lives for themselves.

Ramatoulaye's courage in the novel is based on her ability to rebuild her confidence and fight depression and self-pity. Not all women have the courage to break away from marital oppression and dehumanising marriage, which requires uncommon courage and determination. The novel is indeed a long letter meant to reveal the mind of the women who experience physical and emotional abuse in marriage, in a society that encourages a culture of subjugation on women and turns a blind eye to their suffering.

While many male writers re-cement women's inferior position in the African society, female writers concentrate on female experience, particularly in marriage, in a patriarchal African society. They ensure that women play a crucial role in the plots of their novels. Women are also placed in a position of importance, especially in terms of initiative and dynamism. We see this in the character portrayal of the female protagonists in the novels of Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, and Zaynab Alkali. These female characters are empowered to challenge the myth of the unchanging naïve, rural women who accept without question the social norms of a male-dominated society. In *Efuru* and *Idu*, Flora Nwapa's heroines are portrayed as dignified personalities who have problems and identified ways to solve them.

In *One is Enough*, Nwapa advanced a solution to breaking through some negative parts of tradition through the character portrayal of the female protagonist, Amaka, who displayed a dogged will to survive without the entrapment of a loveless marriage. Forced to leave her marital home because of her inability to conceive, she decided to make her life meaningfully whole by taking some actions. She leaves her teaching profession, moves to Lagos, and takes to trading, putting her whole energies' into it. Her business progressed and she buys a house and a car, and makes the deliberate choice to remain single. Her six-year marriage was filled with emotional abuse, especially from her mother-in-law, who was harsh and overbearing to Amaka. She it was who facilitated her son's marriage to another woman who bore him two sons. Amaka's new-found life is a revolt against the patriarchal system, tradition, and motherhood, not for their own sake, but for what they stood for, the way they negated and obliterated women. She shifted from marriage to individualism and autonomy.

In *Efuru*, the novelist devotes her attention to the exposition of several aspects of Igbo tradition and communal life. Efuru's experiences are used to demonstrate the harsh realities of an Igbo community as it

transits to the modern age. In the novel, Efuru had been involved in two unsuccessful marriages. There was Adizua, a husband who was unable to pay the dowry of his wife, as required by tradition. Yet, he encourages Efuru to break the law by moving into his house before he fulfills any requirement. Traditional law has been violated and the culprits, Adizua and Efuru, will not go unpunished. They have trivialised traditional custom by simply agreeing to be husband and wife without involving the two families and community in their arrangement. The 'illegal' couples went ahead freely in a relationship that has not received the blessing of tradition.

The community waited for a while, hoping to see Efuru's stomach protruding. When they could not see any swelling, they went into a rage. The villagers protest against this development, labelling Efuru a 'man'. How could two men live in the same home as husband and wife, they wondered?

Efuru's apparent barreness do not only create a problem for she and her husband, but also to the entire members of the community. Adizua's initial reaction was to play down the whole affair and reassure his sincerity: "whether you have a baby or not…I will be the last person to do anything that will hurt you…" (p.26).

Efuru and Adizua were tired of the oppressive situation they found themselves. Efuru wanted her husband to get a young girl for a wife, but Adizua would not hear of it. At last, Efuru is pregnant and Ogonim is born, but not for Adizua, who had eventually succumbed to societal pressure to take another wife.

The role of women in marriage has been clearly defined by tradition and even when the woman is financially more buoyant than the man, she is still made to feel sub-human, especially if she is childless. Efuru's sad experience with Adizua has taught her a lesson which came in useful in her next marriage. Her union with Eneberi, which begins with so much promise, ends in another round of unfulfilled expectations, in spite of their love for each other. Again, just like in the case of her first marriage, the women in the village start to gossip and spin all kinds of rumours about Efuru's inability to have her own biological children. They regard Eneberi as foolish, not because he loves his wife, but because he appears to accept her barrenness. If a woman 'fails', as in the case of Efuru, the man should take steps to get himself children from other women.

The addition of the river goddess, Uhiamiri, into the plot of the novel offers a consoling balm to the female protagonist, Efuru, who has suffered much embarrassment and shame from her people, particularly

fellow women. Furthermore, Uhiamiri's presence also signifies that the happiness of a virtuous woman like Efuru should not depend entirely on her ability to conceive. The goddess has other bounties to bestow on her adherents. She can enrich a woman's life spiritually and help remove all the anxiety about having a child:

> She had lived for ages at the bottom of the lake…
> she had never experienced the joy of motherhood.
> Why then did women worship her? (pp. 221)

The novelist has used Uhamiri to symbolise that women's happiness and fulfillment go beyond being married and the ability to procreate. It is linked to economic empowerment which liberates the woman from unnecessary anxiety over prescribed social norms and expectations, and petty quarrels and misunderstandings from fellow women.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What is your view of the general belief that women do not like each other, as seen in the selected African novels?

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, we have discussed a number of contexts that promote conflicts among women, as portrayed in selected African novels. It has also been pointed out that for the African woman, be she married or not, economic empowerment is vital to her dignity and personhood.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt the following:

- Certain contexts encourage enmity among women;
- These contexts are generally surmised to mean that women do not like themselves;
- A number of Nigerian male-authored and female-authored novels explore this general belief;
- The most important factor to a woman's sense of fulfillment is to be economically empowered.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss the context of conflict as it affected the relationship of two female characters in any of the selected novels discussed in this Unit.

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UNIT 2 MAJOR WESTERN FEMINIST VIEWS (I)

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit, a number of Western feminist literary concepts will be identified and discussed. The central tenets of the theories of Western feminists such as Elaine Showalter, Helene Cixous, and Josephine Donovan, will be discussed. This will help to broaden your knowledge about feminism generally, and to be able to explain the ideological differences between Western and African feminism.

Below are the Learning Outcomes of this unit:

2.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss feminism from a Western perspective
- be knowledgeable in the different strands of Western feminism there are
- identify the central tenets of the feminist theories of Elaine Showalter, Helene Cixous, and Josephine Donovan.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Feminism as a Popular Gender Theory

One of the most popular gender theories in literary study since the beginning of the last century is feminism. The theory relates to the radical conception of literary texts as discourse-oriented, as seen in the opinion of the German philosopher, F. W. Nietzche (1844-1900) as well as the New Historicism, made popular by Michael Foucault. Many societies in the world are patriarchal by nature, theory, and practice, institutionalising various fears and anxieties about the mystery and power of women into myths, beliefs, and folklore that have remained in force for centuries. Feminism as a body of gender-sensitive theories question this patriarchal stance, insisting, through various discourses the equity of the sexes to the overall good of all.

Over the years, feminism as a body of thoughts have expanded to admit other types and categories, reflecting the different shades, hues, stances, thoughts, views, concepts, and political divides of women in the world. While Alice Walker calls for the complementarity of the sexes, others insist that women should be restored to their natural and unbiased position in the society. The French feminist, Monique Witting, challenges the term, feminism, as it does not make space for lesbians. In the 20th century, Virginian Woolf, through her timeless article, 'A Room of One's Own' (1929), describes the woman as the looking-glass of man. Other feminists like Simone de Beauvoir, Mary Eagleton, Betty Friedan, Julia Kristever, Helene Cixous, and Luce Irigary have been more confrontational in their postulations. They adopt, through their writings, the moral philosophy, Phallogo (Phallus) Cenrism, that proposes the use of humour and parody to change the epicentre of patriarchy. This position presents an opposing one to Sigmund Freud's concept of penis envy women experience in their relationship with men.

However, the central tenet of feminism remains as it is: women are oppressed based on their sex, and this should not be so. Feminism fights to elevate the status of women in patriarchal societies. Western feminists have condemned expressly, and in very aggressive terms, the prejudice against women, and their maltreatment in patriarchal societies through various forms of writings.

Feminist criticism opposes male-dominated tradition and conventions in literature. Feminists aim to put an end to the 'phallocentric' discourses which treat women as underdogs and/or excludes them as subjects. Helen Cixous in 'The Laugh of the Medusa' (1975) advised women to write themselves into text, and to take active part in writing. There is no

neutral writing as there is no neutral reading, as reading and writing are informed by socio-cultural and political positions. Feminists therefore, aim to challenge the traditional canon dominated by male-authored texts and examine women's literature, the relationship between literature and male biases, and how literature can be used to overcome such biases. The main aim of feminist criticism is to change the existing power relations between men and women.

3.2 Elaine Showalter's Gynocriticism

Feminist literary studies focuses on women, not just as the consumers of literary texts written/produced by men, but as critical readers and writers. This was the view of the American feministic critic, Elaine Showalter, in her 1979 essay titled, 'Towards a Feminists Poetics'. In the essay, wherein she propounded a new feminist concept, gynocriticism, Showalter throws up some critical questions like, what sort of themes are associated with female literary works? What roles do female characters play in texts? What are the implicit presuppositions of a given text with regard to its readers? Feminist critics like Showalter have also critiqued the cultural stereotypes of women in literary texts which often present women as immoral, dangerous, seductress predators, insatiable, lazy, helpless, unintelligent, amongst many other vices.

The concept of 'gynocriticism' explores the relationship of literature and women, demystifying the view of the male author about women, and refocusing the gaze to women as producers (writers) and as consumers (readers). Through this concept, women's literary works that have long been forgotten or subsumed under male literary criticism, are exhumed, and critically appreciated. Gynocriticism, therefore, gives a presence to women's writing by making it an independent and distinct literary discourse, thereby encouraging women's writing, interest in women's writing, and criticism.

The interface between the portrayal of women in male-authored writings and female literary discourse has been described by the American feminist writer, Carolyn Gold Heilbrun, author of the book, *Reinventing Womanhood* (1979), and by Catharine Stimpson, editor of *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* (1974 – 1980), as the Old Testament, "looking for the sins and errors of the past", and gynocritics as the New Testament, "seeking the grace of imagination". Behold, with Showalter's gynocriticism, the former oblivion of women and their writings have passed away, and a new literary consciousness about women's writings have emerged and come to stay.

3.3 Helene Cixous: 'The Laugh of the Medusa'

The French writer, critic, playwright, and scholar, Helene Cixious, has written extensively on women and writing, encouraging women to take up writing as a form of liberation from repressed desires and patriarchal bondage. In her seminal essay, 'The Laugh of the Medusa' (1975), Cixious emphasized feminine writing, insisting that women should write, and continue to write, no matter the challenges luring them to give up on writing. She believes women are in the best position to write about themselves, for they the recipients of whatever throws at them, for good or bad.

For women, writing should be both personal and historical. It is personal because writing can be likened to a woman's body. When patriarchy repressed female writing and criticism, it also did the same to the woman's body, repressing her desires and ambition. But through the act of writing, the woman writes herself, and stamps herself indelibly on the words themselves. This way, she becomes real and, in the present, perpetuating herself and identity for all ages. Through writing, Cixous believes that women boldly enter into history, becoming change agents for womanhood as a whole.

3.4 Josephine Donovan and the Moral Aspects of Feminist Criticism

Feminists have always been concerned with the 'image' of women in literature. Criticism of the images of women helps to facilitate the understanding of how female characters are presented in literary works. According to the Frankfurt School of Marxist Criticism, image perception may sometimes be 'negative', going by the perception of. It is negative because the critic refuses to accept the political, economical, and social structures that institionalise the subservient nature of women. Feminist criticism, contrary to male literature, propagates a positive image of women, promoting women's writings and personhood.

In her book, *Feminist Theory: The Intellectual Traditions of American Feminism* (1985; 2012), Donovan gives a general critique of the masculine literary theories of Marxism, Freudianism, and Existentialism, and their contribution, amongst others, to the sustainability of the gender belief about the irrationality of women. These theories, based on many fallacious reasons, propagate men's image and deny women their personhood. Women are regarded as incomplete, and only enjoying a feeling of completeness in their relationship with men.

Donovan also beams her critical lens on feminism, its history, and the different types there are, making brief discussions on radical feminism, liberal feminism, ecofeminism, global feminism, gynocriticism, amongst others. These theories present a realist portrayal of the woman, thereby affirming their authenticity. When the academia adopted feminism, it took on a political vibe for women to push for more rights based on equity and justice.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Identify six (6) cultural stereotypes against women that are still in existence today.

4.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have discussed feminism as a popular gender theory, paying particular attention on the thoughts and postulations of selected feminist critics and scholars.

In this unit, we have discussed the following:

- Feminism as a Popular Gender Theory
- Elaine Showalter's Gynocriticism
- Helene Cixous: 'The Laugh of the Medusa'
- Josephine Donovan and the Moral Aspects of Feminist Criticism

5.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss the main highlights of the feminist thoughts of Showalter, Cixious, and Donovan.

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UNIT 3 MAJOR WESTERN FEMINIST VIEWS (II)

CONTENTS

1.0 NTRODUCTION

This unit looks at the central theses of some other Western feminists whose works and thoughts have influenced and still influencing the writings of contemporary feminist scholars.

2.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- aquainted with the primary views of a number of other Western feminists
- knowledgeable about the patriarchal environment of the selected feminist writers
- able to identify the individual and similar feminist leanings of the selected feminist writers.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 More on Feminism

Feminism is a broad-based philosophical body of different theories. These theories, diverse in approach and methodology, revolve around the 'woman question'. They specifically address the oppression of the

female sex, in relation to the male sex, in a patriarchal and capitalist state. Amongst the different strands of feminist theory and practice are the liberal, Marxist, radical, psychoanalytic, socialist, existentialist, and postmodern dimensions.
We will look at these feminist types in relation to the reactions and responses of particular feminist writers, who generally agree that the existence of patriarchy has ensured the continued negativity ascribed to women in many aspects.

3.2 Mary Wollstonecraft's 'A Vindication of the Rights of Women'

Mary Eollstonecraft wrote during the 18th century Age of Enlightenment period in Europe. This period, with writers like Hobbes, Hume, Kant, and Locke, have through their writings, theorised on the importance of reason as a liberating tool for all. Through reason, they believe that many truths, across political, social, economic, scientific, and philosophical divides, would be uncovered. As a mental tool that involves intelligence and alertness, the 18th Europe placed reason in the public domain, peopled by only men, while its opposite, emotions, regarded as being fickle, weak, and vain, was pushed into the private realm, a space peopled by women and children. Along the lines of reason and emotions, Jean-Jacques Rousseau wrote a part fictional educational novel, *Emile* (1763), in which the female character, Sophie, lived only to take care of the interests of the men in her life. The book corroborates the 18th century view that men's make-up is rational, while women's make-up is emotional. Therefore, male students should be trained in the sciences, while female students should be trained in 'caring' skills that would complement their homemaking attributes. Professions like nursing, teaching, counselling, and cooking are usually expected to be practiced by women.

However, Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792; 1975) was written in response to a proposal made the French Minister of Education in 1791 about the French government making the education system in the country more robust and holistic for boy students, who would be trained in the sciences and humanities, while girls would be restricted to Home Economics and sewing. She argues that women are presumed emotional because they are not allowed to freely make decisions, and they are also prevented from exercising the inherent power of reason in them. The kind of formal education being practiced then was deliberately tilted to train boy children in being assertive and independent, while girl children were educated to be dependent and submissive. Women should enjoy the same legal, political, economical, and civil rights as men. So, women should be

equally educated as men so that they can put to good use both their emotional and rational capacities and abilities, for the good of all.

Wollstonecraft also disputed the general myth that women are weak, and not as physically strong as men, arguing that women could be strong in body and in mind, if they so desire. Clive Schreiner, a South African political activist and author, shared similar views with Wollstonecraft in her book, *Women and Labour* (1911). She states that a woman's primary role is to perpetuate the human race through childbearing and motherhood. However, this should not be her only work, for through this, she should be given access to mental work through which she would be intellectually and professionally competent at bringing up children. Betty Friedan's book, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) goes a step further by advocating that married woman should not spend all their time and energy taking care of their husbands, children and home. They should step outside the boring routine by working outside the home. In *The Second Stage* (1981), she advises women not to hate men by seeing them as batterers, rapists and sexual harassers, but that they (the women) should work hand in hand with men in order to change society's values.

3.3 Heidi Hartman's 'The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism'

Marxist feminist thought revolves around the issues of class, class consciousness, and false consciousness. Marxist feminists believe that class plays a primary role in the status of women. Finding it difficult to place women under one class because of the bourgeoise and proletarian demarcations (as women are related in one way or the other to a male member of either of the social class), they were able to classify women because of their work, especially the work within the home, housework. Margaret Benston (1969) opines that women should be remunerated for their work within the home. She lambastes the capitalist system for demeaning women's work. However, the duo of Della Costa and James (1972) assert that women's housework is 'productive' because in taking care of the physical and emotional needs of men, capitalism is sustained.

In her essay, 'The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism' (1979), Hartmann highlights the importance of Marxist Feminism, which critiques the capitalist system of Europe for encouraging the ownership of private property (which usually includes women and children) and the exploitation of women.

However, she is of the opinion that feminism and Marxism cannot be equal partners, as most often in Marxist discourse, feminism is always subsumed or totally relegated. She urges the two concepts to be treated

based on their individual strengths so that they can both challenge capitalism and patriarchy, which allows men to control women through monogamous/polygamous marriages, childbearing, heterosexual relationships/marriages, and women's financial dependence on them. Men also control the labour of women in the public realm through the sexual division of labour, which makes women overworked and underpaid.

Young (1989) cautions against seeing capitalism and patriarchy as mutually exclusive. Gender relations make up a major part of class relations. In other words, capitalism thrives because it is partly based on the marginalisation of women.

3. 4 Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*

Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) confronts the chauvinistic stereotypes about women in 20th century post-war French society. She differentiates between sex and gender, with the former being biological and the latter social. The label, 'woman', is a social concept, therefore, a patriarchal and male concept, prescribed to denote the supposed subservient nature of the female sex. She also emphasises in the book the dichotomy between male and female, and the currents of power and powerlessness inherent in both. In a society where a particular sex is socially regarded as subserviently different from another, then it is easy to see them as the 'Other'. Man sees woman as not being one of his own, and so she becomes inferior to him. This is because, according to them, women's reproductive capacities are seen as been responsible for their 'weak' state – physically, psychologically, and mentally. Men's fewer active roles in reproduction, and their more active roles in production place them in the enviable position of the 'Self'. To be free from the 'Other' categorisation therefore, de Beauvoir suggests that women must shun marriage and motherhood, as these limit their freedom, preventing them from having the time and creative energies to really be themselves.

Pertaining to the gaze and all the images it throws up, patriarchal society regards men as the object, the ones in charge of control apparatuses, while women are the subjects, the ones pliable to being controlled and dominated.

Simone de Beauvoir condemns all the gender stereotypes that restrict women to playing the 'second fiddle' in the society at the expense of their capacity to succeed at self and community development. She extols women to rise above the negative beliefs, as they are equal to their male counterparts.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Many of the social stereotypes against women during the 19th and 20th century are still in place today. Do you agree with this?

4.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have discussed the central tenets of the postullations of three additional Western feminists – Mary Wollstonecraft, Heidi Hartmann, and Simone de Beauvoir. Their writings have contributed greatly to feminism as a liberating tool for women worldwide.

In this unit, we have discussed the following:

- Mary Wollstonecraft's seminal book, 'A Vindication of the Rights of Women';
- Heidi Hartmanns postulation that Marxism and Feminism are not best friends, as the former will always overshadow the latter;
- Simone de Beauvoir's negation of the general myth that women are a 'second sex'

5.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss the main highlights of the feminist thoughts of Wollstonecraft, Hartmann, and de Beauvoir.

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UNIT 4 GENDER AND GENDER THEORIES

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit, we are going to look more closely at the concept of gender and the theories that revolve around it. Below are the Learning Outcomes of this unit:

2.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- define gender
- list and explain gender theories
- differentiate the gender theories from another
- explain reasons for your preferences.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 What Gender is and is Not

Gender is a field of interdisciplinary study which analyses sex, race, ethnicity and sexuality. The term has several definitions, depending on how an individual sees it. It usually refers to a set of characteristics that distinguish between male and female, reflect one's biological sex, either real or perceived, and it is distinct from sexual orientation. It is one's

internal, personal sense of being a man or a woman, girl or boy. There are two main sexes - masculine and feminine. Gender expression refers to the external manifestation of one's biological identity, through masculine, feminine, or gender-variant or gender-neutral behaviour, clothing, hairstyles, or external bodily characteristics.

Generally, however, gender is the social relationship between the two human sexes, male and female, in a given environment. While sex refers to the biological or physical make-up of a person, gender emphasises the social, which includes the set of social and behavioural norms that are considered to be socially acceptable for individuals of a specific sex in the context of a specific culture, which differ widely between cultures.

3.2 Gender Theories

There are several theories of gender, and they revolved mainly around three: the biological, socialisation, and the cognitive. The theories conceptualised in gender are enormous, a reflection of the complexities involved in gender, the relationship between men and women in a given context.

In this Unit, we will briefly discuss three classes of gender theories: gender theories in Sociology; gender theories in Psychology; and gender theories in English Studies. All the gender theories there are can be grouped under any of these three.

3.2.1 Gender Theories in Sociology

These theories revolve around socially prescribed behaviours for both the sexes. There are particular behaviours boys and girls, men and women are expected to display in a particular society, and these are labelled as masculine, feminine, or queer, if there are deviations from the first two. These behaviours also extend to clothing, speaking, relationships, to mention a few. For example, women are generally expected to be gentle, softly spoken, and 'submissive'. However, there are always exceptions to the rule, and society labels these exceptions as being queer.

There are three main theories that critique these socially prescribed behaviours, and these are functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism.

3.2.2 Gender Theories in Psychology

The theories in this category are concerned about the social environment children grow up in, and the myths and beliefs they are conditioned

with, particularly about gender. The knowledge and expectations boys and girls have about one another spring from the social conditioning they were brought up in. Their culture also prepares them on the roles they are expected to carry out as members of a particular sex. These expectations are usually doble-edged: the child is not only aware of what society expects from him or her, but also from the opposite sex.

The theories in this category include psychodynamic theory; social learning theory; and cognitive-developmental theory.

3.2.3 Gender Theories in English Studies

The theories in this group critique the power of language to label, dehunamise, annihilate or empower another person or group of persons within a particular social context. Through the word, a particular group is seen as being the 'other', and treated as such. The power of speech used to belong to only one group, but with education and enlightenment, women are beginning to speak, and to take back what belongs to them.

Theories in this category include deficit theory; dominance theory; radical theory; difference theory; and reformist theory.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What is the difference between sex and gender?

4.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have discussed the concept of gender, and looked at some gender theories.

In this unit, you have also learnt:

- the definition of gender;
- some major gender theories.

5.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What are the three major theories of gender?
2. Identify and discuss the main focus of the three categories of gender theories.

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