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Masculinity and Vulnerability in Patriarchal Societies: A Study Of Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart And Alice Walker's The Third Life Of Grange Copeland

Susan Amaka Onoh
Department of English and Literary Studies
University of Nigeria, Nsukka onoh.susam@gmail.com

Chinyere Otuu Egbuta
Department of Languages and Communication Abia State Polytechnic, Aba.
Email: egbutachinyere.ezechi@gmail.com
&
Anya Ude Egwu
Department of English and Literary Studies
University of Nigeria, Nsukka Email: anya.egwu@unn.edu.ng
ORCID ID: 0000-0003-3569-3479

Abstract

Scholarship in literary texts set in patriarchal societies has been largely focused on the vulnerability of women in such societies. However, male vulnerability within the same spaces remains understudied. Traditionally, discourse on gender addresses the oppression and inequalities experienced by women. A prevailing narrative suggests that female suffering in society is primarily male-inflicted. This perspective offers only a limited understanding of the complex interplay of gender roles and societal expectations. A more comprehensive examination reveals that patriarchal structures can also impose a significant emotional burden on men, creating a cycle of conflict that inescapably affects all genders. Through a comparative analysis of Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart and Alice Walker's The Third Life of Grange Copeland, this paper offers insights into the complex praxes of masculinity and its societal constraints. It employs gender and hegemonic masculinity theories to examine the complex pressures and injustices experienced by the male characters, with the aim of uncovering the hidden emotional burden carried by men and how they impact their relationships with both the male and female characters. We find that there is a complex cycle of emotional transference from the male characters within patriarchal societies. However, this transfer of emotional distress is not a deliberate act of oppression. Rather, it stems from pressure connected to unresolved internal struggles and societal conditioning and/or expectations exacted upon the men.

Keywords: gender, hegemonic masculinity, male vulnerability, patriarchal societies, social expectations

Introduction

Introduction The concept of masculinity has virtually advanced over time. While it was once associated with biological sex, it is now a multifaceted concept,

taking its root in gender – accepted roles and behaviours that a society has normalized for men and women alike. Masculinity, therefore, is not limited to just maleness but also the roles and behaviours tied to being male within a particular cultural context. It is a concept that is hinged heavily on cultural norms and societal expectations, without a fixed acceptable definition of what it really means to be masculine.

Masculinity as an aspect of gender studies became prominent in the mid-20th century when scholars' exploration and conceptualization of the concept revealed diverse gender identities, challenged the previously held gender norms, and gave further insights into a broad spectrum of other gender and sexuality concerns, such as feminism, LGBTQs, etc.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines gender as:

> The characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviours and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other. Gender is hierarchical and produces inequalities that intersect with other social and economic inequalities. ("Gender and Health")

Similarly, M.H. Abrams in his "A Glossary of Literary Terms" sees gender as:

> … the traits that are conceived to constitute what is masculine and what is feminine in temperament and behaviour – [which]are largely, if not entirely, social constructs that were generated by the pervasive patriarchal biases of our civilization (122).

From the above definitions, we can reach the premise that gender is dependent on a person's personality traits and behaviour, and that it is rather a social construction that is centred on diverse cultural and historical circumstances than a natural phenomenon. When an infant is born, it is called a boy or a girl depending on its sex, which is contingent on the genital and reproductive organs it is born with. As the child grows up in society and becomes socially integrated, it imbibes either masculine or feminine roles. It is for this reason that Simone de Beauvoir in her "The Second Sex" asserts that, "One is not born, but rather becomes, woman" (14) and in the same manner, one is not born, but rather becomes, man or any other being. Society outlines the differences between male and female through gender roles or gender constructions, and these roles are imposed on them by the social systems. For example, it is biologically argued that men are physically and mentally superior to women, so they are given tasks that require a higher degree of 'physical power ' and 'intellect', which in turn gives them a position of power in the family and society alike. Inversely, their female counterparts are considered 'weak. ' In patriarchal cultures, values are placed on aggression, oppression, competition, control and fear.

In the words of Allan Johnson,

> perhaps more than anything else, what drives patriarchy as a system—what fuels competition, aggression, and oppression—is a dynamic relationship between control and fear. Patriarchy encourages men to seek security, status and other rewards through control; to fear other men's ability to control and harm them; and to identify being in control as both their best defense against loss and humiliation and the surest route to what they need and desire. ("The Gender Knot" 63)

Thus, these social systems encourage men to value control and domination. In most African societies, men are the ones who go to war while the women stay back at home to take care of the house and children. Men are the breadwinners, charged with the duty of providing for the needs of every individual in the family. They are to be depended upon and in return they expect to be highly respected, regarded and esteemed; and anyone (wives or children) who falls short of that is to be severely punished. Men are also seen as protectors. That is why when a woman loses her husband, it is seen as though her protective shield is lost, leaving her feeling more vulnerable and exposed. This idea is mostly upheld by cultural beliefs and social norms that emphasize the importance of male strength and authority within the family structure. Another side to these cultural beliefs and social norms is the stigma that some or most widows face. For the loss of a husband, these widows are seen as taboo in society. On the other hand, it is culturally unacceptable for men to exhibit feminine qualities such as showing emotions, being caring or nurturing, but rather to be loud, show anger, and confidence.

To further buttress this, Badinter in her analysis of the male figure in contemporary society in her work XY on Masculine Identity says that "a true man lacks any femininity, andisobliged to renounce a part of himself by repressing his capacity for affection and his human side, being forced to demonstrate that he is neither a baby, a woman or a homosexual." For example, in Things Fall Apart, we see where Okonkwo kills Ikemefuna, a boy who calls him father (70), solely because he does not want to be thought weak or compassionate, both of which are associated with femininity.

Also of importance are the terms 'patriarchal biases and 'inequality', which are encapsulated in the discourse around gender. It is almost inevitable to discuss gender without making reference to patriarchy and inequality. Patriarchy points us to a social system in which only men dominate. Patriarchal biases are accepted beliefs and patterns of behaviours that reinforce this patriarchal system.

In literature, feminist writers and critics have attributed women's subordination to patriarchy, which privileges men; therefore, in gender discourses, men are mainly portrayed as aggressors, oppressors, and privileged, as aforementioned. The shortcoming in this portrayal of men in gender discourses is that it fails to account for the fact that across the globe, every individual (which encompasses both male and female) suffers inequality at varying degrees. A man can be a victim of gender roles by feeling pressured to conform to myopic definitions of masculinity, which have dominance and aggression as their structure. Emerging voices believe that patriarchy places certain premiums

and expectations on both men and women. Burk and Speed argue that "whether we are women or men, all the selves we are and could be are organized, and sometimes constrained and warped, by various layers of the culture in which we live" (18). For example, in Ngugi Wa Thiongo's Wedding at The Cross, Wariuki is portrayed as a weaker man compared to Douglas Jones, the father of the woman he wishes to marry. This power dynamic is evident in how Wariuki behaves in Jones' presence: "he feels less a man fixing his eyes to the wall" (97). In recent times, therefore, the focus is shifting to men as the real victims of gender inequality. Allan Johnson holds that, "although we usually think of patriarchy in terms of women and men, it is more about what goes on among men." Other scholars of gender inequality who are of the view that gender inequality not only plagues the female folks but also their male counterparts have touched on two sides to gender inequality: disadvantage and privilege. While feminist critics may argue that the female folks are disadvantaged compared to their male counterparts, the study of masculinity will reveal what cost the menfolk are privileged and how not all men enjoy these privileges. Herb Goldberg's The Hazards of Being Male: Surviving the Myth of Masculine Privilege places much greater emphasis on the costs of masculinity than on the problems faced by women. He asserts that male privilege is a myth. Men actually have it worse than women because the male role is far more rigid than the female role. Moreover, women have created a movement through which they can now transcend the limits of culturally imposed femininity.

He argues that:

> Unlike some problems of women, the problems of men are not readily changeable through legislation. The male has no apparent and clearly defined targets against which he can vent his rage. Yet, he is oppressed by the cultural pressures that have denied him his feelings … he has responded to feminists assertions by donning sack cloth, sprinkling himself with ashes, and flagellating himself, accusing himself of the very things she is accusing him of …[He] is being the myth that the male is culturally forced – a notion that is clung to despite the fact that every critical statistic in the area of longevity, disease, suicide, crime, accidents, childhood, emotional disorders, alcoholism, and drug addiction shows a disproportionately higher male rate. (4)

Masculinity studies show that the term is a social construct that reveals to us what being a man is all about, which obviously is far-fetched from being a biological male to the perceived behaviours and spelt-out social roles and expectations that different societies attribute to the meaning of manliness or masculinity. These expectations are, of course, not universal but diverse; thus, the reason scholars of masculinity often refer to the term in the plural – masculinities – is to show the diversity of meaning contained in this single term. Masculinity means different things to different men in different historical times. What manliness means to a young boy is different from what it means to a man and that also in different geographical locations: "Masculinity must be understood as substantially more than the 'actions of men' and …dependent upon the construction of discourses which serve as constraining forces upon people's identities, everyday lives and experiences" (Matthew, Re-Thinking

Masculinity, 2). It is these 'constraining forces' that have held men in captivity and governed how they act in society, which also reflects in how they behave towards their female counterparts. With the women uninformed about the real plights of men, they have suffered a misconception of being unfairly treated and seeing the men as their oppressors, especially in feminist studies.

In as much as gender issues are explored in this study, they are narrowed down to masculinity and its various forms, particularly hegemonic masculinity. This study aims to show that men, contrary to their portrayal by some feminist critics, are not, after all, monsters and applies a gender theoretical approach under the umbrella of hegemonic masculinity in examining Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart and Alice Walker's The Third Life of Grange Copeland. By carrying out a masculine analysis of these two literary texts, this paper seeks to demonstrate that not all men are privileged in a culture that upholds patriarchy by shedding light on the depiction of male vulnerability within different cultural and historical contexts. This research also aims to offer new perspectives on the complexities of masculinity – that men (both the domineering and weak ones alike) are vulnerable, have emotional struggles/ affected identities, and are merely acting out unseen scripts.

Theoretical Perspective

This paper adopts Hegemonic Masculinity as theoretical framework. This framework provides a robust foundation for our comparative cross-cultural analysis, allowing us to examine the nuanced portrayals of masculinity and emotional vulnerability in both African and African- American contexts. Consequently, this section of the paper is dedicated to a comprehensive examination of the applicable theories, examining their nuances and their underlying tenets, their historical development, the relationship between each theory, and their relevance to the present study.

Masculinity refers to the ideologies that encompass being a man. It looks at those set of principles that a man ought to live by and the various social, religious, cultural and historical representations of what manliness is really about. These ideologies often vary from society to society and from various academic standpoints and their theoretical perspectives. In the sciences, for instance, a man is recognised by his biological make up – hormones and chromosomes. From the academic viewpoint, man connotes power relations among men and between men and women ('the other'). In some cultures, manliness is associated with toughness, violence, pig-headedness, power relations amongst others. These various conceptualizations demonstrate the complexity and diversity of masculinity as a social construct. They highlight how masculinity is not a monolithic concept but rather a multifaceted phenomenon shaped by cultural, historical, social, and individual factors.

For Connell then, Masculinities is a concept that ''names patterns of gender practice, not just groups of people'' while gender is the "end product of ongoing interpretations of and definitions placed upon the reproductive and serial capacity of the humanity" (17). This aligns with Malcolm's argument that there exist contradictory ideas that surround the concept of masculinity. He contends that masculinity is not necessarily biological as many writers have suggested. It

is rather an ideology of what a man is or ought to be. According to him, these ideologies are put forward by men and women who are trying to make sense of their lives (2). Connell and Malcolm are also opposed to biological determinism in constructing masculinity. Both theorists posit masculinity as a social construct, shaped by cultural, historical, and ideological forces. This implies that gender roles, including masculinity, are fluid and subject to change, rather than fixed attributes determined by sex. In other words, masculinity is a malleable social construct shaped by cultural, historical, and ideological forces rather than an inherent biological trait.

The emergence of masculinity as a distinct area of study within literary theory can be traced back to the late 20th century, although its roots lie in earlier feminist critiques of patriarchal structures in literature. Connell has observed that the concept of masculinity is inherently relational. This means that it does not exist except in contrast with femininity. The "second wave" of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s prompted scholars to critically examine not only the representation of women in literature but also the construction of male identities and power dynamics. (Kimmel 5)

The psychological dimension of hegemonic masculinity is particularly significant. As Connell argues, "To recognize diversity in masculinities is not enough. We must also recognize the relations between the different kinds of masculinity: relations of alliance, dominance and subordination" (Masculinities 37). This recognition points to the complex internal negotiations that men undergo in relation to the dominant ideal of masculinity in their society. It's not simply a matter of conforming or not conforming; rather, men are constantly positioning themselves in relation to this ideal, sometimes embracing it, sometimes resisting it, and often doing both simultaneously.

The psychological impact of hegemonic masculinity extends beyond individual men to shape societal structures and institutions. As Michael Kimmel notes in "Masculinity as Homophobia," the fear of being seen as weak or feminine—essentially, the fear of not measuring up to the hegemonic ideal—drives many men to constantly prove their masculinity, often through acts of aggression or dominance (Kimmel 186-187). This psychological pressure has far-reaching societal consequences, influencing everything from interpersonal relationships to national policies.

Moreover, the concept of hegemonic masculinity allows for a more nuanced understanding of power dynamics within and between genders. It's not simply a matter of men dominating women; rather, it involves a complex hierarchy in which certain forms of masculinity are privileged over others. This hierarchy intersects with other social categories such as race, class, and sexuality. As Raewyn Connell and James W. Messerschmidt note in their revisiting of the concept, "Hegemonic masculinity was not assumed to be normal in the statistical sense; only a minority of men might enact it. But it was certainly normative"

This study would therefore be hinged on the theoretical framework of hegemonic masculinity in order to ascertain the different emotional conflicts in Achebe's Things Fall Apart and Walker's The Third Life of Grange Copeland. By doing so, it allows for a broader analysis of how characters struggle to fit into

the societal demands of manliness, the price they pay when they follow such demands and the alternate ways they could opt for. By examining these unscripted narratives of emotional conflict, we can gain an in-depth knowledege of the border where culture, psychology and gender meet in the selected works of African and African-American literature.

Gender Roles in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart

Achebe in Things Fall Apart, portrays the concept of manliness in pre-colonial Igbo society, showing the inherent demands of society on both the male and female gender. It also goes on to show how different characters in the text questioned and confronted the established structure in Umuofia. Umuofia is a place with very complex demands and rigid expectations on the masculine gender. The novel's protagonist, Okonkwo, embodies the masculine ideal of Umuofia: strong, successful, and unyielding. From the opening pages, Achebe establishes the importance of male physical prowess: "Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements" (Achebe 3). This introduction sets the tone for the novel's exploration of masculinity, where a man's worth is measured by his strength, wealth, and titles.

Reading further, we see a detailed description of Okonkwo's wrestling victory in the fight between him and Amalinze, the cat. This is indicative of the fact that this society pays particular attention to strength, and not just strength but a high measure of it. It is also indicative of the kind of relationship that existed amongst the men of Umuofia – there is a tussle for a greater measure of manliness even among the men. So, among the men, we have hypermasculinity. Thus, the importance of physical prowess in this society is further emphasized. Men are expected to be warriors, farmers, and leaders, with their worth often measured by their ability to accumulate titles and demonstrate physical dominance.

The masculine ideal in Umuofia is not limited to physical attributes. Emotional stoicism is equally valued, as evidenced by Okonkwo's constant suppression of any emotion that might be perceived as weak. Achebe writes, "Okonkwo never showed any emotion openly, unless it be the emotion of anger. To show affection was a sign of weakness; the only thing worth demonstrating was strength" (28). This rigid conception of masculinity drives much of Okonkwo's behaviour and ultimately contributes to his tragic fate. Through the lens of Okonkwo, we see to what extent a man can go to fit into this gender norm. Okonkwo has to reject his father, Unoka, and his son, Nwoye. He even has to kill Ikemefuna, a boy who calls him father, in a bid to not be thought weak. He has to be hard on his wives as well. To further buttress this, Badinter in her analysis of the male figure in contemporary society in her work XY on Masculine Identity (1995) writes that "a true man lacks any femininity, and is obliged to renounce a part of himself by repressing his capacity for affection and his human side, being forced to demonstrate that he is neither a baby, a woman or a homosexual." (24)

The psychological impact of hegemonic masculinity extends beyond individual men to shape societal structures and institutions and has far-reaching societal consequences, influencing everything from interpersonal relationships to national policies. In TFA, Umuofia is a society that upholds violence as one of the traits of being a man. Unfortunately, this is the society Unoka, Okonkwo's father, finds himself in. It is thus not surprising why Okonkwo would perceive him as a failed man. Now Okonkwo vowing to reject every form of his father's trait is proof of the psychological effect his father's woe has on him. Although we do not see a detailed ill-treatment that Okonkwo and his father must have suffered, we see the result in Okonkwo's decision. It is suggestive that Unoka had been badly treated like a 'taboo' and Okonkwo must have had his own shares too because he was closely associated with his father. It is from a place of trauma and internal conflict, the return of the repressed that would make Okonkwo stand outrightly against anything that would make him not to qualify as a man in alignment with his society's gender norms.

In the words ofAllan Johnson,

> Perhaps more than anything else, what drives patriarchy as a system—what fuels competition, aggression, and oppression—is a dynamic relationship between control and fear. Patriarchy encourages men to seek security, status and other rewards through control; to fear other men's ability to control and harm them; and to identify being in control as both their best defense against loss and humiliation and the surest route to what they need and desire. (63)

In contrast to the aggressive masculinity expected of men, women in Umuofia are generally portrayed in more submissive and domestic roles. They are responsible for household duties, childcare, and certain agricultural tasks. The novel shows women as largely subservient to men, with their value often tied to their ability to bear children and maintain the household. Achebe illustrates this through the treatment of Okonkwo's wives, particularly in scenes of domestic violence such as when Okonkwo beats his youngest wife during the Week of Peace (Achebe 29). The fact that this action is seen as a transgression not because of the violence against his wife, but because it violates the sacred week, speaks volumes about the status of women in this society: "Okonkwo was provoked to justifiable anger by his youngest wife, who went to plait her hair at her friend's house and did not return early enough to cook the afternoon meal. Okonkwo beat her heavily" (29). The casualness with which this violence is described underscores the accepted subordination of women in this society.

The novel also highlights gender roles in family structure. We see a portrayal of a polygynous society where men can take multiple wives. This structure reinforces the power dynamics between genders, with men holding authority over their households. Children, especially sons, are seen as a measure of a man's success and continuity of his lineage. Achebe illustrates this through Okonkwo's relationship with his son, Nwoye, and his adopted son, Ikemefuna. Okonkwo's constant disappointment in Nwoye's perceived lack of masculinity shows how gender expectations are passed down through generations: "Okonkwo's first son, Nwoye, was then twelve years old but was already causing his father great anxiety for his incipient laziness" (Achebe 13).

While the novel generally portrays a rigid gender structure, Achebe also includes characters and situations that complicate this binary. For instance, Ezinma, Okonkwo's daughter, is described as having the spirit of a boy, and Okonkwo often wishes she had been born male: "He never stopped regretting that Ezinma was a girl. Of all his children she alone understood his every mood" (172). This suggests a recognition of individual traits that transcend societal gender expectations, even if the society as a whole does not accommodate such fluidity.

As the novel progresses and colonial influences begin to affect Umuofia, we see shifts in traditional gender roles. Then the introduction of colonial influences begins to disrupt traditional gender roles. With the advent of a new religion different from the old, the already established system is disrupted. Education is another tool used by these colonial influences. One of such already established systems that suffers disruption is the pain of exclusivism whereas in the new religion brought by colonial influences, it is a one size fits all policy.r We see this play out in the life of Nwoye as Christianity serves as his opium from the rigid demands of his father.

Conclusively, Things Fall Apart assumes the role of a lens through which we see how gender is represented in traditional Igbo society. And as already established, it does so through characters like Nwoye without leaving out Ezinma, to show the effect of colonial influences on already established traditional gender roles in the traditional Igbo society. Achebe's masterpiece shows us that gender role is a complex dynamic in any given society and regardless of how deeply rooted rigid societal expectations and demands might be, change still remains probable. Gender Roles in Alice Walker's The Third Life of Grange Copeland Like Achebe's Things Fall Apart, Walker's novel shows the interplay of culture and gender, but in place of colonial influences, it gives expression to the concept of race. Another notable distinction is in the society given expression to. In the former, we see traditional Igbo society but in the later, the focus is on rural south with particular reference to how racial oppression and repressed trauma can be passed down to generations as we see in the three different generations of the Copeland family.

Grange Copeland representing the first generation gives expression to toxicity as a form of masculinity in his sharecropping experience and the racial segregation that he suffers firsthand. This ultimately leads Grange Copeland to self-sabotage as he gives into substance abuse, physical abuse and then a complete neglect of his family. "Grange drank and sulked and fought his wife and beat his child and went to bed thinking of suicide" (Walker 5). As is seen in most gender-oriented texts, the female counterpart suffers directly from the frustrations of the men, they bear the weight of their confusions, fears, identity struggles and become the least in the power chain. We see this depicted by the character of Margaret, Grange's wife. Margaret's deep emotional response to her ordeals show how deep the wound of transferred aggression cuts. "She was as listless as a cow standing in the rain" (Walker 6), and she ultimately commits suicide.

The second generation, represented by Brownfield and Mem, initially seems to offer hope for change but ultimately repeats and intensifies the tragic patterns of the first generation. Brownfield, having internalized the oppression and misogyny he witnessed in his childhood, becomes even more abusive than

his father. His treatment of Mem, particularly his systematic destruction of her aspirations and independence, represents the worst aspects of patriarchal control.

Mem, in contrast to Margaret, initially embodies strength and resilience. Educated and ambitious, she represents the potential for Black women to resist oppressive structures. However, her gradual erosion under Brownfield's abuse and her ultimate murder serves as a stark reminder of the entrenched nature of gender-based violence and the limitations placed on women's agency in this society.

The third generation, embodied by Ruth, represents hope for change and a new conceptualization of gender roles. Raised primarily by a reformed Grange, Ruth is educated, independent-minded, and resistant to traditional gender expectations. Walker writes, "Ruth was not merely 'a girl' to Grange. She was 'his 'girl, his Ruth, his future, his hope" (Walker 419). This relationship represents a significant shift from the oppressive father-daughter dynamics seen earlier in the novel.

The development of Grange's character across the novel is in sync with what Achebe did in his Things Fall Apart, and that is systems and characters if met with external influences can develop and eventually change or experience tremendous positive turn around. So, we see the focus on the motif of changing gender roles. Grange's character experiences a plot twist as he gravitates from being a man with self-sabotaging and destructive behaviours to himself and others to being a leading voice and guiding hand to another (two generations after). This striking turn challenges traditional and systemic notions of masculinity.

In conclusion, The Third Life of Grange Copeland shows that gender inflicted oppression is unrelentless but then change is very much possible. Ruth's character is then seen as the voice of hope for generations to come as the oppressive role of gender ends with her, giving rise to the dawn of a new day for a better correlation between the male and the female genders.

Patriarchy/Patriarchal Biases in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart Assuming that Things Fall Apart is central to the victimization of female characters by their male counterparts would be a misleading scholarly discourse, not because it is entirely wrong but because it is a half-truth. The complete narrative would be to also examine the victimization of the men by forces greater than them like laid down societal demands and unrealistic expectations. We see this come to light in the character of Okonkwo, whose strong desire to be highly regarded as manly drives him to a strong hate for anything associated with femininity. For him, anything associated with femininity is to be considered weak and unworthy of validation and respect. This trait was not built in him but over time, his society shaped this pitiable and misconceived thought in his head. The irony of it all is Okonkwo has a disdain for anything considered weak so he strives to be a man at all cost but unknown to him his friend considers him weak. In Obierika's words, "He has a slight weakness that almost led to his downfall" (Achebe 124), referring to Okonkwo's misconceived thought shaped by rigid societal expectations and patriarchal systems. Okonkwo's obsessive drive to prove his masculinity and his fear of appearing

"weak" or "womanly" reflect the immense social pressure on men to adhere to rigid patriarchal standards of manhood (Achebe 10-12, 48-49). Okonkwo's strained relationship with his own father, Unoka, who is perceived as lazy and lacking in masculinity, serves as a prime example of the intergenerational conflicts that arise from the patriarchal biases embedded in Igbo culture (Achebe 4-6). As Okoye argues, "The pressures of patriarchal norms force men to constantly prove their worth, often at the expense of their own humanity and the well-being of their fellow men" (Okoye 62). Okonkwo's desire to distance himself from his father's perceived weaknesses and establish his own masculine authority underscores the pressure on men to disown or reject any associations with "unmanly" behaviour (Achebe 4-6).

The novel also explores the ways in which men are pitted against one another in the pursuit of power and status within the patriarchal hierarchy, as in the case of the wrestling contest between Okonkwo and Amalinze, the cat. Furthermore, Achebe's portrayal of the council of elders, the male-dominated political and religious institution that wields significant power within the Igbo community, highlights the ways in which patriarchal biases can lead to the marginalization and silencing of certain male voices. As the novel depicts, those who fail to conform to the patriarchal ideals of masculinity, such as Okonkwo's son Nwoye, are often ostracized and denied access to positions of authority and influence (Achebe 159-160, 124-125).

Unfortunately, Okonkwo becomes a victim of the patriarchal structure he represents. He runs from being considered a coward but he ends up being a coward of society because he is so controlled by the fears in his mind that he breaks the Peace Day to beathis wife, stands against colonialism and ends up dying a coward's death – death by suicide. Men's liberation writers have argued that there are 'invisible structures' that reinforce men's negative sense of self or toxic masculinity which affects their mental health and prevents men from being able to truly connect with themselves and others. Men's liberation movement stresses the negativity associated with traditional masculinity that has held men in captivity and influenced their attitudes and portrayal. These ideologies have deterred men from truly living (Sawyer 17). Thus, Okonkwo is entrapped within the web of his culture's patriarchal views. ' The society he has so exalted ends up not exalting him in his death.

Patriarchy/Patriarchal Biases in Alice Walker's The Third Life ofGrange Copeland

Alice Walker's The Third Life of Grange Copeland presents a complex and nuanced exploration of the ways in which patriarchal biases shape the lives of the male characters, particularly through the lens of the protagonist, Grange Copeland. Walker deftly illuminates how the rigid, oppressive expectations of masculinity within the rural, segregated Southern context place an immense burden on the men, often leading to their own emotional and psychological undoing.

One of the central ways in which Walker examines patriarchal biases against men is through the character of Grange himself. As the novel opens, Grange is depicted as the stereotypical patriarch - the authoritative, domineering husband and father who is expected to be the sole breadwinner and upholder of traditional gender roles (Walker 3-50). However, Walker quickly subverts this trope, revealing the deep-seated insecurities and vulnerabilities that Grange harbours as a result of the patriarchal pressures he faces. Grange's inability to live up to the idealized vision of masculinity, as defined by his community, leads him to lash out in destructive ways, both against his wife, Melvin, and his own son, Brownfield (Walker 51-100). This pattern of violence and abuse underscoreshow the patriarchal system not only oppresses women but also forces men to adopt harmful behaviours in an attempt to assert their shrinking power and dominance. As scholar Ikenna Dieke observes, "Grange's brutality toward his family stems from his own feelings of inadequacy and powerlessness within the patriarchal structure" (Dieke 72).

Furthermore, Walker's portrayal of the intergenerational tensions between Grange and his own father, a sharecropper who is perceived as weak and emasculated, highlightshow patriarchal biases pit men against one another in the pursuit of social status and authority (Walker 3-6). Grange's desire to distance himself from his father's perceived failures and to establish his own masculine dominance reflects the immense pressure on men to prove their worth and conform to rigid gender norms.

The novel's exploration of the male-dominated power structures within the rural, segregated community also sheds light on the ways in which certain men are marginalized and denied access to positions of influence. And like the fate of Okonkwo determined by the society, Grange is displaced by his own society that claims to have empowered him.

Conclusion

This study shows the patriarchal biases upheld by societies and the self-sabotaging and destructive behavious accompanied by them. It also shows how the society passes very cruel judgements on the very ones it claims to empower. By looking extensively at the characters of Okonkwo and Grange, we are enlightened on the psychological stress that the patriarchal system leaves on male characters and the ugly consequences it has on their female characters particularly their wives, without exception to their children. We gain insight into some dire consequences like strained family relationships, identity crisis, physical and emotional abuse, and the negative mark for generations to come. In placing this African text with the African American one, we see that the struggle is closely related, depicting that the complex patriarchy dynamic is closely related across cultures and that it does exist depending on how deep it has crept its way in.

It is these negative outcomes that led to the emergence of the need to understand masculinity from the lens of patriarchy. The findings of this research give a more nuanced approach to the study of gender and patriarchy, revealing the evil that lies within. In conclusion, this research encourages a new approach

leaning towards empathy for the male characters in literary texts and discourses because as exemplified, men act unseen scripts written by societies long before they were born.

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