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A Comparative Reading of Domestic Violence Against African Women in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Bayo Adebowale's *Lonely Days*

Olugunle, Wole

Postgraduate Student

Department of European Studies

University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

E-mail: oluwolekingsley@yahoo.com; woleshadrach@gmail.com.

Phone: +2348030572891, +2348072615526

Abstract

Domestic violence is a phenomenon that cuts across races, colours, cultures and continents. It is a societal problem with its consequences reaching far beyond the family. Studies have shown that violence within the family becomes the breeding ground for other social problems such as substance abuse, juvenile delinquency, and violent crimes of all types. This paper examines how the phenomenon of domestic violence, in the African milieu, is painted and presented in the African literary productions. We examined the polarized positions taken by the two Nigerian writers, Chinua Achebe and Bayo Adebowale in their novels. Adopting the theory of liberal feminism as our theoretical framework and textual analysis as methodology, the paper found out the concomitant harsh effects of the phenomenon of domestic violence as a common ground between the two writers, but it has also discovered that despite the number of years that existed between the production of the first and the second novel, the state of the phenomenon rather exacerbates on a daily basis. These shall be seen through the comparative analysis of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Bayo Adebowale's *Lonely Days* (2006).

Key Words: Gender Studies, Liberal Feminism, Comparative, Women and Domestic Violence.

Introduction

A comparative study of literature is interdisciplinary, and also studies the interrelationships between two or more literatures across cultures, periods, linguistics and national boundaries. Chinua Achebe and Bayo Adebowale are two different writers from two different local linguistic backgrounds. No doubt, they both share the same national *lingua franca*; English Language which is their means of writing. Nevertheless, this does not obliterate the fact that their cultural nuances as well as the number of years

that existed between them would not have some implications on their ideologies. In view of this, it gives room for a comparative study of these two authors.

The objective of this study is to do a comparative analysis of domestic violence in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Bayo Adebowale's *Lonely Days* (2006), and examine how the reality of the phenomenon in the African milieu is painted and presented in the African literary productions. The study examines the polarised positions taken by the two Nigerian writers. Moreover, the study also wishes to know whether women are the only victims of domestic violence, and to know whether the state of the phenomenon has improved overtime.

The Authors and their Works

Chinua Achebe, a celebrated African novelist, born 16 November, 1930 at Nneobi village, Ogidi in Anambra State, an Eastern part of Nigeria; authored *No Longer at Ease* (1960), *Arrow of God* (1964), among others, presents in his canonical text *Things Fall Apart* (1958), from a Masculinity's perspective, the ancient Igbo hegemonic and patriarchal society where the men were despotic and authoritative, where they (the men) subalternise the women and children either by beating them, shouting them down or abusing them. Bayo Adebowale born 6 June, 1944, a Nigerian poet, prolific writer, novelist, and critic, from Adeyipo, Ibadan, the capital Oyo State, the Western part of Nigeria; authored *The Virgin* (1985), that is adapted into two films; *The White Handkerchief* (1998) among others, meticulously examines some of the violent punishments mete out to widows from the feminist perspective in his work *Lonely Days* (2006).

The Concept of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a phenomenon that cuts across races, colours, cultures and continents. It is not peculiar to a specific race or culture, it is a societal problem with consequences reaching far beyond the family. Violence in the domestic sphere is usually perpetrated by males who are, or who have been, in positions of trust and intimacy and power - husbands, boyfriends, fathers, fathers-in-law, stepfathers, brothers, uncles, sons, or other relatives. Women can also be violent, but their actions account for a small percentage of domestic violence.

Many definitions of domestic violence abound but none is universally accepted. Some from scholarly works and others from state laws. These definitions are dependent on the culture of the defining state and the period in which the definition was proposed. Anne L. Ganley (2002:61), defined domestic violence as "a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviours, including physical, sexual, and psychological attacks, as well as economic coercion, that adults or adolescents use against their intimate partners".

For the purpose of this paper, however, the definition in Article 5 of the Brazilian Maria da Penha Law (2006), as quoted in the *UN Handbook for Legislation on Violence against Women* (2009), quoted by George, T.A (2015, pp. 11-12) is considered to be encompassing and thus apt. It states that:

Domestic and family violence against women is defined as any action or omission based on gender that causes the woman's death, injury, physical, sexual or psychological suffering and moral or patrimonial damage". It further explains that: "this definition includes violence committed in the 'domestic unit', defined as the permanent space shared by people, with or without family ties; in the 'family', defined as the community formed by individuals that are or consider themselves related, joined by natural ties, by affinity or by express will; and in any intimate relationship.

With many works on the phenomenon of domestic violence as an academic discourse, just to mention Alokun, F. B. (2013), "Domestic Violence against Women: A Family Menace", researched on its effects on the family and Ishola (2016) looked at the experience of domestic violence in Nigeria in "Domestic Violence: The Nigerian Experience". While Bayo Adebawale's *Lonely Days* (2006) is relatively new, Achebe's canon, *Things Fall Apart* (1958) has attracted several critics from around the world. Ravenscroft, Arthur (1969) and David, Carroll (1976) with Chinua Achebe, Killam, G.D (1973) with *Novels of Chinua Achebe*, Gareth, Griffiths (1971) with "Language and Action in the Novels of Chinua Achebe", Umelo, Ojinmah (1991) with *Chinua Achebe New Perspectives*, just to mention a few. Several other social and literary critics have in one way or the other delved on the novel of Chinua Achebe, nevertheless, in our opinion, we notice that none of these seem to be on a literary work of Chinua Achebe or any, thus this paper is conceived to comb this lacuna.

Causes and Effects of Domestic Violence

Domestic Violence as a societal problem is actually caused by some factors which have some grave effects. Among the causes of domestic violence is family upbringing and moral values. As we shall see in Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*, whose intention is to morally up bring his children to be diligent, and Yaremi on Woye in *Lonely Days*. Cultural belief is another cause of domestic violence which is very pronounced in the two *œuvres*, the case of the young Ikemefuna and the young virgin in *Things Fall Apart* as well as the treatment of widows in *Lonely Days*. Financial issue is also a cause as it is common with the men of Kufi village to beat their wives because of their poverty in *Lonely Days*. In *Things Fall Apart*, Nneka is maltreated because of her supposed childlessness.

Its effects range from physical as in the case of Uzowulu's wife who loses her pregnancy as a result of domestic violence against her from her husband in *Things Fall Apart* and the widow's appearance disfigurement in *Lonely Days*; to stigmatisation as Nwoye deserts his parents in *Things Fall Apart* as well as the widows in *Lonely Days*, to psychological which makes Woye make frivolous promises to his Granny in trepidation in *Lonely Days*.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Gender studies englobe several theories; Feminism, Masculinity, queer among others. In view of this, Aduke, Adebayo (2015, p. 4) posited that;

In literature and criticism, feminism is asserting, describing and documenting women's experiences. It was an emancipatory movement which donned at a particular historical time a militant and sometimes violent face in the West. While accepting the emancipatory and documenting nature of feminism, the African feminist has discarded its violence and militarism. In its first phase, the task was to document some negative aspects of African and imported cultural practices which retard the full development of the African women; practices like leverage, widowhood, forced and child marriage, male violence, modern polygamy among others. In carrying out their duties, the African feminist writers and critics were combative and for justifiable reasons.

This research is grounded in the liberal feminist analysis of inequality, discrimination and dehumanisation of women. The theory has been at the centre of women's struggles since the eighteenth century. Liberal feminism provides a deeper understanding of gender-related issues such as domestic violence, exclusion, inequality, repression, oppression, prejudice and imbalance in a patriarchal society.

Patricia Hill Collins (1900, 2000) opines that the liberal feminist theory has its root in the social inequality theory of Karl Marx and provides the basis for the global movements for women's

emancipation and respect of their natural and civil rights. According to Lourdes Beneria (2003) cited by Folami, O. M. (2013, p. 4), liberal feminism, also known as “egalitarian or mainstream feminism,” is considered the most moderate branch of feminist theory. It is based on the simple proposition that all people are created equal and should not be domestically, socially, politically and economically denied rights because of gender. Liberal feminism is based on enlightenment beliefs of rationality, education, and the natural rights that extend to all men and women.

Tong, Rosemarie (2009, p. 34) summarised the liberal/classical feminism by saying; "Liberal feminists wish to free women from oppressive gender roles - that is, from those roles used as excuses or justifications for dehumanising and giving women a lesser place, or no place at all, in the society.

The two works, *Things Fall Apart* and *Lonely Days*, present us with the trend of domestic violence against children, women, and of course domestic violence against widows in the African milieu. This will be fully discussed in the analysis. Since the research is purely academic, it adopts the methodology of textual analysis.

The Reality of the Phenomenon of Domestic Violence in *Things Fall Apart* and *Lonely Days*

In a manner of comparative analysis, we examine the trend of domestic violence against children, women, forced marriage and widows in the two literary *œuvres*.

Domestic Violence against Children

Domestic violence against children is otherwise known as child abuse, they are usually below the age of 18. It involves physical and psychological abuse and injury, abandonment, exploitation and sexual abuse. The perpetrators may include parents and other close family members. The perpetrator's threats of harm may be against the victim or others important to the victim. They could be threats of suicide, maiming, or even killing. They could be made directly by words (e.g., "I'm going to kill you.", "I shall break your head," "No one is going to have you if I can't have you," "Your mother is going to pay," "I cannot live without you") or by actions (e.g., stalking, displaying and use of weapons, suicide attempts, serious beating, etc).

Okonkwo, the main character of the novel *Things Fall Apart* (subsequently referred to as *TFA* followed by the page number), is well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. He is a prestigious member of his community whose fame rests on his solid personal achievements as a young man of eighteen with numerous titles and honours. However, his success and achievements and the cultural dictates begin to make him violent, despotic and authoritative towards his children, wives and people. He does not mind being unnecessarily violent on them. Nevertheless, Okonkwo's short-temper and heavy-handedness, both with outsiders and with the members of his household, constitute grounds for reproach and domestic violence:

... And he did pounce on people quite often. He had a slight stammer and whenever he was angry and could not get his words out quickly enough, he used his fist.... Okonkwo ruled his household with a heavy hand. His wives, especially the youngest, lived in perpetual fear of his fiery temper and so did his little children (*TFA*, pp. 3,11)

The forceful alienation of the two children who are the prisoners of an unfought war speaks of violence against children. Following the murder of Ogbuefi Udo's wife on her way to Mbaino market, Ogbuefi Ezeugo - the village's powerful orator - breaks the sad news to the people of Umuofia, and exasperatedly, he refers to the people of Mbaino as; "Those sons of wild animals have dared to murder a daughter of Umuofia", (*TFA*, 9). Consequently, to forestall an inter-communal clash between Umuofia and Mbaino, Okonkwo goes to Mbaino. He is treated with the greater honor and respect, and also returns

to Umuofia with what we conceive as prisoners of unfought war - a young lad of fifteen named Ikemefuna and a young virgin. After his arrival and his reports to the *ndichie*, they decide;

At the end they decided, as everybody knew they would, that the girl should go to Ogbuefi Udo to replace his murdered wife. As for the boy, he belonged to the clan as a whole, and there was no hurry to decide his fate. Okonkwo was, therefore, asked on behalf of the clan to look after him in the interim. And so, for three years Ikemefuna lived in Okonkwo's household (*TFA*, pp. 10-11)

It is the height of violence against these two prisoners of unfought war as they are alienated against their volition, and are given out to different people in a foreign land.

Ikemefuna has grown to enjoys a very good friendship with everyone in Okonkwo's household. Prior his final execution, a group of elders from all the nine villages visits Okonkwo to discuss the modalities of Ikemefuna's execution wish made them send him and his friend, Nwoye away. Later in the day when Okonkwo tells Ikemefuna that he is to be taken home the following day; perhaps from his understanding of the culture of Umuofia or for the fact that he would be lonely after the departure of Ikemefuna, Nwoye overhears and bursts into tears. Okonkwo does not hesitate to descend heavily on the innocent Nwoye. It is described thus; "Later in the day he called Ikemefuna and told him that he was to be taken home the next day. Nwoye overheard it and burst into tears, whereupon his father beat him heavily" (*TFA*, p. 46).

Pareillement, we remark the execution of Ikemefuna as a child abuse. After few months, Okonkwo and Ikemefuna grow to love each other that Okonkwo desires to have him as his biological son while Ikemefuna calls him father. But as the dictates of the gods, culture and tradition of the people of Umuofia, he must be sacrificed. Despite the warning of Okonkwo from Ezeudu, the oldest man in Umuofia, not to bear hand in his death because he calls him, Okonkwo, father, Okonkwo flouts it. The killing of Ikemefuna is described thus;

As the man who had cleared his throat drew up and raised his machet, Okonkwo looked away. He heard the blow. The pot fell and broke in the sand. He heard Ikemefuna cry, 'My father, they have killed me!' as he ran towards him. Dazes with fear, Okonkwo drew his matched and cut him down. He was afraid of being thought weak. (*TFA*, p. 49)

Okonkwo, Ikemefuna and Nwoye, prepare the seed-yams to be planted during the next planting season, however, Okonkwo knows and understands too well that the affairs of deftly splitting a tuber of yam considered to be too big along its length with a sharp knife is not for children, yet, Okonkwo gave them a few yams each to prepare. Because he demands too much from them, he will never reward the effort of this little lads with any iota of commendation, rather, it is condemnation. He always finds fault with their effort, and he does that with much threats. When he supposedly finds fault with Nwoye's effort of yam splitting, he threatens him thus;

Do you think you are cutting up yams for cooking?' he asked Nwoye. 'If you split another yam of this size, **I shall break your jaw**. You think you are still a child. I began to own a farm at your age. And you', he said to Ikemefuna, 'do you not grow yam where you come from?' (*TFA*, p. 26)

With our emphasis on '**I shall break your jaw**', we wish to draw our attention to the fact that Okonkwo abuses his children by threats and that he never gives an empty threat.

Similarly, Yaremi, the widow and main character of *Lonely Days* (refer to as *Lonely* hereafter), is guilty of domestic violence against her grandson, Woye. Yaremi has enjoyed a blissful home with three children - Segi, Wura and Alani - in company of her husband with occasional disagreement before his death. Thereafter, in order to keep body and soul together, she becomes more diligent and dedicated to her work of dyeing. She also brings Woye, her grandson, to stay with her. Like Okonkwo, Yaremi understands that the task of beating a taffeta into fine pleats is not meant for a young lad of Woye's age, yet, she condemns him by calling him lazy and demands too much from him. Not only that, she also threatens to beat the hell out of the boy. In her threat, Yaremi says;

... Lazy boys are many in this village - and you are one of them. You are their leader. Just let me finish folding this taffeta and reach for my cane at the corner of the room.... I will crack the whip down in terrific speed; and when I get tired, Woye, the whip will drip in slow motion round your tiny body. I will make you howl like a dog kicked in the stomach, for stealing the only bone in the soup pot. (*Lonely*, pp. 6-7)

Consequently, despite the emptiness of Yaremi's threat, the young Woye becomes psychologically disjointed as he conceives the threat a serious one. Woye pleads, swears and promises;

No Mama! Don't beat me", Woye always pleaded. " Please don't beat me like a dog. I am not going to be lazy anymore. I swear, Mama. Being lazy is not good for a small boy like me... Tomorrow Mama, I'll beat ten taffeta pleats and, day after, ten pleats, to please you. Next week Mama, I'll beat forty, all in one day (*Lonely*, p. 7)

It is obvious that Yaremi is only giving an empty threat to the young Woye while trying to guide him against procrastination, "*Never leave till tomorrow what you could do today. Today is sure, Woye. But nobody knows what tomorrow will bring*" (*Lonely*, 7), however, without considering the psychological implications of her empty threat on him.

Following the snippet Okonkwo received from his cousin, Amikwu, that Nwoye is among the Christians, when Nwoye returns home in the afternoon he greets his father who answers him with fury and suddenly springs to feet, gripping him (Nwoye) in neck while he struggles to free himself from the choking grip. Okonkwo, the 'Roaring Flame' as he is fondly called, seizes a heavy stick that lay on the dwarf wall and hit with two or three savage blows while Nwoye remains stoic. He roars; '*Where have been?... Answer me..., before I kill you... Answer me!*' (*TFA*, pp. 121-122).

Psalms 127:3 that avers that children are the heritage of God does not stipulate them to be single, twins or triplet, all it says is children. In *TFA*, one of the dictates of the culture of Umuofia and the other surrounding nine villages is the killing and throwing away of any set of twins that is given birth to. The case of "Nneka who has had four previous pregnancies and childbirth. But each time she has borne twins, they are been thrown away immediately", (*TFA*, 121), speaks of violence against children.

Domestic Violence against Women

Alokan, F.B (2013:100) posits that the United Nations General Assembly defines violence against women as *any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life*. Relying on WHO Study (2005), Bakare, M.O et al (2010:5-6), say physical violence include the women being;

- slapped or thrown something at that could hurt her,

- pushed or shoved, hit with a fist or something else that could hurt. Besides, she could be kicked, dragged or beaten up,
- choked or burnt on purpose, threatened with or actually used a gun, knife or other weapon against her.

The killing of Ogbuefi Udo's wife by the people of Mbaino can be seen as the genesis of the phenomenon of domestic violence against women in *TFA*. The forceful alienation of the young virgin to a strange land eventually landing in another's bed as her husband which is against her will is a violent act against women.

Besides, Okonkwo commit a sacrilege by beating Ojiugo, his youngest wife, during the Week of Peace where no one is expected to be violent against his kinsman. Ojiugo has gone to her friend's house to plait her hair without informing her husband. Being a good eater, he is ravenously hungry, not knowing at first that Ojiugo is not at home, and after waiting in vain for the dish, he goes to his wife's hut to see what she is probably doing. He gets there there is nobody and the fireplace is cold. Consequently, Okonkwo, having asked his second wife the whereabouts of Ojiugo whom she covers up, walks back to his hut to await her return. She receives the beating of her life. The beating is described thus;

And when she returned, he beat her very heavily. In his anger he had forgotten that it was the Week of Peace. His first two wives ran out in great alarm pleading with him that it was the sacred week. (*TFA*, pp. 23-24)

Similarly, where Okonkwo almost kills his second wife is another demonstration of domestic violence against women. In the build-up to the feast of the New Yam Festival where his guest would make a fairly big crowd, his wives are committed and diligent. As matter of fact, she has merely cut a few leaves from a banana tree in their compound to wrap some food. Okonkwo who has been rambling aimlessly, full of anger, in his compound suddenly finds an outlet by turning her to a punching-bag. He roars; *Who killed this banana tree?... Who killed this banana tree? Or are you deaf and dumb? Without further argument Okonkwo gave her a sound beating and left her and her only daughter weeping....* (*TFA*, p. 30).

Having displaced his anger on her to his satisfaction, he decides to go hunting which he is not known for. When he calls Ikemefuna to fetch his old rusty musket for him, the second wife who has just been beaten murmurs something about guns that never shot. On hearing this, Okonkwo dashes inside for the gun and tries to kill her with it. The loud noise that accompanies his pulling of the trigger at his second wife makes the remaining two wives and their children wail in sympathy;

.... the second wife who had just been beaten murmured something about guns that never shot. Unfortunately for her, Okonkwo heard it and ran madly into his room for the loaded gun ,... He pressed the trigger and there was a loud report accompanied by the wail of the wives and children (*TFA*, p. 31)

Even in religious *endroits*, women still suffer violence. This is seen in the case of a young woman in *TFA*, who is suspended from the church by Reverend James Smith, the successor of Mr Brown, within a few weeks of his arrival in Umuofia. He alleges the woman that; *'This woman had allowed her heathen husband to mutilate her dead child* (*TFA*, p.147).

Domestic violence against women can also come from the family of the husband or the wife. Nneka is a typical example in *TFA*, with four previous pregnancies and childbirth but each time they are twins and are immediately thrown away not minding the pain she undergoes in the labour-room and as if it is

her own making of giving birth to set of twins, the husband and his family are critical of her supposing her to be childless. Achebe says;

Nneka had had four previous pregnancies and childbirth. But each time she had borne twins, and they had been immediately thrown away. Her husband and his family were already becoming highly critical of such a woman.... (*TFA*, p. 121)

With the arrival of a new religion, Christianity, at Mbanta, the religion and culture of the people are seriously threatened and desecrated by the new religion's faithfuls. Thus, the new religion, now a small community of men, women and children, self-assured and confident, is outlawed. They are denied access to anything that belongs to the village. Hence their preparation for the Holy Esther Week fails because some men heavily beat some women at the stream, the village red-earth, and other at the chalk quarry. The leader of these women, Mr Kiaga has to round off his prayer and listen to the wailing of the women;

Mr Kiaga... rounded off his prayer and went to see what it was all about. The women had come to the church with empty water-pots. They said that some young men had chased them away from the stream with whip. Soon after, the women who had gone for red earth returned with empty baskets. Some of them had been heavily whipped. The chalk women also returned to tell a similar story (*TFA*, p. 138)

Some domestic violence in *TFA* require the intervention of the nine ancestral masquerades before they can be settled as some men beat their wives even when they are heavily pregnant. In the case of Uzowulu who beat his wife, it is the oldest of the ancestral *egwugwu* that intervenes because Uzowulu does not listen to any man, (*TFA*, 72-75).

In the same vein, through a flashback narrative technique, we notice that violence against women is ubiquitous in Kufi as men turn their wives into punching-bags and displace their poverty, powerlessness and frustration on them. Ajumobi, Yaremi's husband is also culpable of this when he was still alive. He says;

In Kufi, wife beating was common. It provided outlet for husbands' sense of powerlessness and frustration, in the face of grinding poverty... Yaremi had always wondered who on earth, bestow this right on her husband (*Lonely*, p. 63).

Yaremi's feminism is radical as this is noticed in her defense of her human/woman right against her own husband. This contradicts Okonkwo's wives who are liberal in their own approach to their plight in the presence of their husband. Several times, Yaremi taunts and scolds Ajumobi. She postures adamantly before him, proficiently hurling insults and making life thoroughly miserable for him. She stands toe to toe with him, arguing, giving him a taste of her telling sharp tongue. In his reaction against Yaremi's unnecessary excessiveness, Ajumobi who is a stammerer stutter and threatens Yaremi;

You must-must be mad, Yaremi!... What an-an insult! I've ne- ne- never been so much insu- insulted in my whole life. Just let me cat- cat- catch you... and show you the ma- ma- man in me. Ya- Yaremi... I'll beat you silly. I'll th- thra- thrash you, li- li- like the whea- wheat in- in a barn. I'll sei- sei- seize the pestle inside the mortar and poun- poun- pound you hard with it, likeho- ho- hot yam (*Lonely*, pp. 62-64)

The violence sometime escalates that Yaremi pulls down her husband's *buba* (regalia) from the wooden rack and tears it into shred because her husband hotly provokes her by passing uncomplimentary remarks on her cooking, on her appearance, and her personal habits.

Forced Marriage

Forced marriage is a situation whereby young adult girls even though they are of marriageable age, or widows are forced to marry someone against their will. A few months or years into such marriage, since it was not contracted on a platter of love, the girl or the widow will no longer enjoy the marriage and she will begin to do everything it takes to end it. This could be one of the reasons why divorce cases or single mothers are on the increase in the African society. On the other hand, underage girls are forced into marriage again on religious and cultural persuasion. This form of abuse is mostly practiced in some parts of Africa, especially the northern part of Nigeria, where young immature girls are given out in marriages to wealthy men to become a part of their harem.

Forced marriage in *TFA* is seen with the experience of the young virgin of Mbaino. Following the news of the death of a daughter of Umuofia, the wife of Ogbuefi Udo, and the visit of Okonkwo to Mbaino sees him return home with two prisoners of unfought war as earlier said. One of them, according to the dictates of the culture and the decision of the *ndichie*, is forced to say yes when she means to say no by going into a forced marriage to Ogbuefi Udo; *The elders, or ndichie, met to hear a report of Okonkwo's mission. At the end they decided, as everybody knew they would, that the girl should go to Ogbuefi Udo to replace his murdered wife. (TFA, 10)*. Such a marriage of the young virgin as a compensation to Ogbuefi Udo's murdered wife is neither the will of the young virgin nor is it on a platter of love, thus, it is violent.

Similarly, in *Lonely*, there are instances of forced marriage. After the death of the initial husbands of these three senior widows; Dedewe, Fafoyin and Radeke, through the event of cap-picking, were forced to remarry to another man. Even when it is not their wish or on the basis of love to get married to them but in their quick readjustment and embracement of the demands of tradition as well as their philosophy that '*no woman's life is ever completed without a man to prop her on in the arduous journey of this world*' (*Lonely*, 111), they remarry *en désespoir de cause*.

This remarriage is to be forced on Yaremi who fights it through. Despite series of empathies and admonitions received from the erstwhile widows, Yaremi rejects the violence of forced marriage, as well as her daughter Segi, who breezed into Kufi a week after the cap-picking incident. They both swear to fight against the violence by all means. Segi says;

Second marriage for Mama? No! No! No!... Mother and daughter considered the issues for several hours and, at last, voted solidly against a second marriage. There was no reason for it! And they swore to resist levirate, in whatever form, with all energy at their command (*Lonely*, pp. 124-127)

The collaboration of Segi with her mother to reject such cultural practice of forced marriage is the synergy in the contemporary feminist philosophy to rally against some social and cultural dictates that are uncouth and infringe on the fundamental human/woman rights. This translates into the shift in the discourse of feminism from liberal to radical.

Domestic Violence against Widows

This type of domestic violence against widows is otherwise known as Abuse of widows. What is in vogue in the African society is that when a man dies, the wife is put through all manners of abuse. She is always the prime suspected killer or the cause of the death of her husband. She is made go through some horrible, terrible and dehumanising rituals. *Tant pis* for her if she gave birth to only female child/children. She will be stripped of all her husband's belongings. Bayo Adebowale paints in *Lonely*. He presents Yaremi, the main character and three other senior widows; Radeke, Fafoyin and Dedewe

to show the reality of this phenomenon in Africa, who are targets of repression and hostility, forever leading a life of aloofness - subdued, silenced, subalternised and humiliated. Their rights are trampled upon by the custodians of tradition.

Yaremi as a widow suffers domestic violence not only with her husband, but also with his relatives after the death of her husband. Nine months after the death of Yaremi's husband, Ajumobi, amid her mournful state, there are series of signs marking his peaceful transition to the world of his ancestors. However, these signs are greeted with disdain by the people of Kufi, a preparatory ground for unleashing their hidden intention of maltreatment of Yaremi. Despite her efforts to console herself, the 'sympathisers' are only lurking on Yaremi for the appropriate time to unleash their hidden 'dragon' on her;

... She was scanned by mourners in all directions. All eyes followed every footstep she took with hostile closeness. And all ears listened, ready to catch her every word in a set-trap. These, obviously, were not people merely sitting in silent sympathy in the presence of death, but people who were fully bent on humiliating her and destroying her reputation (*Lonely*, 3)

The image of violence and maltreatment the widows usually receive from the members of the extended family of the deceased, usually few days after the burial of the dead is carefully painted. Yaremi, still marooned in her cocoon of solitude, loneliness and aloofness, receives the maltreatment and domestic violence she suffers from the extended family with insults, mockery and abusive words on her; '*Then followed, after few days the extended family's mockery heaped on her like the strange showers of a January rain....*' (*Lonely*, 3-4)

In addition, the three senior widows lament the encroachment on their fundamental human/woman right of freedom of expression through dancing. They cannot vividly remember the last time that some irresistible rhythmical sounds make them wriggle and tweak their buttocks in the ecstasy and frenzy of the hide-brimmed-stem (to borrow J.P Clark's words). Since they are alone with nobody seeing them, they seize the opportunity of expressing themselves in what they have missed - dancing - as they listen to the faint, far-away sound of the distant music. They lament; *But this one coming to us on this road now really is something.... Long time since we last danced*, (*Lonely*, 22-23).

In each of their experience, Dedewe, for instance, cries all night brooding over the humiliation she suffers at the hand of her husband's relatives. After her husband's death, they sit her down alone beside his corpse which lies on a wooden slab in the inner apartment of a dark room and demand she confess her sins, sins she cannot remember to have committed against her husband. To crown their wickedness all, they lock her up with the corpse in that dark room. They say;

Confess, confess, confess.... Ask your husband to have mercy. Kneel down and beg for forgiveness.... Confess Dedewe, to avoid punishment of heaven.... To big big lies you used to tell against him to spoil his good name.... (*Lonely*, 25-26)

In a similar abuse of widow, Fafoyin - the second widow - was given libation to lick when her own husband died. The husband's relatives hold it firmly to her lips, to purge her of all the sins they insist she too has committed. The people, out of hatred and wickedness, go beyond the dictates of their culture, they sprinkle cold water on her head, to soften the texture of her hair for easy total shaving off. The barber that is summoned props her head between his thighs, clenches his teeth, and begins scraping away her hair with 'a sharp crocodile nacet blade'. The people say to the barber;

Cut the hair down to the roots.... Even if the skin on the head has to be bruised in the process! Bruise it, for goodness sake! We hope your razor is sharp enough to do the job

the way we want it done? Cut this woman's hair totally down to her scalp! Sprinkle her head with wood ash and oil it with paraffin ointment. (*Lonely*, 26-27)

Aftermath the barber's displacement on Fafoyin, her appearance alters terribly like a mad woman.

As for the third widow, Radeke, when her own husband died, she kneels down before the corpse of her husband, and a string of dirges run out of her dry throat. But in exasperation, the people implicitly rain curses on Radake who is suspected as the killer of her husband. As she sings, professing her eternal unfeigned love and submission to her husband and desire to go with him, the people say;

Lie!... Bloody liar, going to hell! Darkness never ends for the rodent entrapped in a calabash container. Forever the killer will be hungry and be perpetually in debt. She will owe the butcher at the abattoir... (*Lonely*, pp. 28-29).

She sings the widow's traditional song of lamentation and innocence to defend herself and of her true love for her husband.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Achebe painted domestic violence from the masculine perspective, extolling the masculinity. Although he still presents the women to be 'Saviours' referring to them as 'Nneka', but he still gives priority to the male folks as virtually all the social activities that take place in the novel are exclusively meant for the men while the menial and domestic works for the female. Bayo Adebawale, however, can be said to be a feminist writer. He exposes all the domestic and social violence the women suffer, painting them as they feel them. He presents them as he sees them. He upholds the clamour of the feminists through Yaremi, Segi her daughter and the three other widows in rejection of some sociocultural practices that encroach on the fundamental human/woman rights.

Aussi, the periods in which the two novels are published, 1958 and 2006, a period of about five decades, show that the conditions of the phenomenon of domestic violence as painted and presented in the novels have not improved rather deteriorating. We found that women are not the only victims of domestic violence, children are also vulnerable. We noticed a shift in the feminist ideology from liberal to radical feminism. This is in the cases of Okonkwo's wives who cannot fight for their human/woman rights. Contrarily, Yaremi stands to protest what she sees or perceives to encroach on her human/woman rights.

Conclusively, both the oppressors and the oppressed have a right to be safe from all forms of harm. Most battered women care about their children's safety and want to protect them. In many cases, the best way to protect the child is to protect the mother from an abusive partner. It is the responsibility of any society to make the society safe for women by reviewing some social and cultural dictates. Besides, a careful study of African culture reveals that man should treat women with dignity and respect instead of abusing them, they are to be cherished and not brutalized. But bearing Yaremi's attack on her husband in mind, are we now saying that in this contemporary world, men are not also victims of domestic violence that even claim their lives?

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