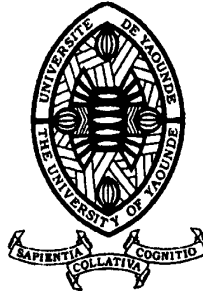


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DISMANTLING OPPRESSIONS IN BOLE BUTAKE'S LAKE GOD THE SURVIVORS AND PALM WINE WILL FLOW

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the
Award of a Postgraduate Teacher's Diploma(DIPES II) in English Studies

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ABSTRACT

This work, entitled “Dismantling Oppressions in Bole Butake’s *Lake God, The Survivors* and, *And Palm-wine Will Flow*”, examines the oppressive measures that have been put in place by the male in order to subjugate both the female and nature in a patriarchal society. The study is based on the hypothetical contention that although women and nature have been dominated by men, this domination cannot be completely achieved because these oppressed groups still have a vital role to play in societal evolution. Feminism and Ecofeminism has been used to analyze the work. Feminism has been used to analyze this work with focus on ‘Womanism’ as it examines feminism from an African perspective whereby the African woman advocates the accommodation of both men and women in the society. Ecofeminism, on its part, was used to show the double oppression of woman and nature and also the relationship that exist between human beings and the environment. The study has shown that man’s domination is only short-lived as the woman has risen above the fixed roles put in place for her to show that she can excel in all walks of life. Consequently, it has proven that there is a need for harmony between man/woman and human/nature for societal evolution.

RESUME

Cette recherche intitulée “Dismantling Oppressions in Bole Butake’s Lake God and Other Plays” se penche sur les mesures oppressives qui ont été mises en place par l’homme afin de subjuguer la femme et la nature dans une société patriarcale. L’étude est fondée sur l’affirmation hypothétique selon laquelle bien que les femmes et la nature ont été dominées, cette domination ne peut pas être effective parce que ces groupes opprimés ont encore un rôle important dans l’évolution sociétale. Nos analyses ont été faites à l’aide des théories du féminisme et de l’éco-féminisme. Le féminisme a été utilisé pour analyser ce travail en mettant l’accent sur l’approche féminine qui, à son tour, examine le féminisme dans une perspective africaine où il est révélé que la femme africaine cherche la convivialité entre l’homme et elle-même dans la société contrairement au cas occidental. L’éco-féminisme a plutôt été utilisée pour démontrer la double oppression de la femme et de la nature ainsi que la relation qui existe entre l’homme et l’environnement. Cette étude a ainsi révélé que la domination de l’homme est éphémère car toute société qui n’intègre pas la femme et la nature présente des manquements, d’où le besoin de l’harmonie entre les humains et la nature pour une évolution optimale de la société.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my loving mother Mrs Anna Bih Tibui

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this work, entitled “Dismantling Oppressions in Bole Butake’s *Lake God*, *The Survivors*, and *And Palm-wine Will Flow*” submitted to the Higher Teacher Training College (ENS) Yaounde, in partial fulfilment for the award of a Postgraduate Teacher’s Diploma (DIPES II), was carried out by Solange Shwiri Tibui, under my supervision.

SUPERVISOR

Dr Eleanor Anneh Dasi

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
CERTIFICATION.....	iv
GENERAL INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER ONE: THE PLACE OF THE WOMAN: FROM A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE.....	16
CHAPTER TWO: THE SUPREMACY OF THE FEMALE BODY	29
CHAPTER THREE: PROGRESS IN COMPLEMENTALITY.....	42
CHAPTER FOUR: THE PEDAGOGIC RELEVANCE OF LAKE GOD, THE SURVIVORS AND PALM-WINE WILL FLOW.....	51
GENERAL CONCLUSION.....	59
WORKS CITED.....	64

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Historically, the oppression of women by men predated the development of a class divided society. That oppression in different forms is still widespread in a world dominated by patriarchy. In effect, females wherever they are, suffer from male domination in varying degrees. They are treated unfairly as they have to deal with abuse of all sorts: sexually, physically, mentally and verbally. Although this great tragedy is all over Africa, there are a few women who have broken away from the old traditions and made a life for themselves. But in so doing, they go through several ordeals. This is because, in most African communities, when a woman decides not to conform to the dictates of patriarchal traditions she is shunned from her community and family. Over all, what women have to go through is tremendously awful. That is why some African writers have taken the challenge to address and redress this issue by showing that the roles ascribed to women -child bearer, domestic servant and cooks- are equally important because taking them away will create a gap in the society.

Traditional African cultures in stipulating the roles of women have turned to portray women as items, objects and possessions men can acquire. Thus, in some communities, women were viewed by their husbands as achievements just like titles and yam barns. This is reiterated by Chinua Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* when he says:

As wives, women come in multiple numbers, sandwiched between yam barns and titles... these three... wives, yam barns and social titles are the highest accolades for the successful farmer, warrior, and man of worth. These determine a man's social status as illustrated by Nwakibie who has three large barns, nine wives... (21)

Women are viewed as objects or trophies that add to a man's numerous accomplishments. Their comparison to yam barns and titles, only served to itemize them and make them sub humans. Hence, they have nothing to offer in the society which is not true as every human being has a role to play in his/her community.

Similarly, the acquisition of women as a means of showing a man's strength has led to the act of polygamy. Polygamy is a common practice where a man is entitled to as many wives as possible thus leaving many women at the beck and call of one man. Some of the reasons put

forth for this act is the inability of a woman to bear a child and sometimes a male child for the sake of continuing the family line. This act, which clearly marginalizes the woman, raises the role of the male in reproduction to that of the female; women were thus compared to fields which will gestate and bear male seed or better still a baby making machine.

In cultures that do not only see the woman as subordinate but associate her to nature which is seen as “alien”, authorizes the twin oppression of both the woman and nature. They observe that the feminization, naturalization or the animalization of an ‘other’ is often essential to its ensuing subordination. In effect, metaphors of language which reveal its ideological underpinnings are adopted, like “the rape of nature”, “mother nature”, “virgin forest”, to feminize nature. In turn, colloquialisms for women such as “pussy”, “bitch”, “old hen”, “sow” and the like have served to animalize the woman and thereby, reinforce women’s inferior status by appealing to women’s animal (thus non-human) nature. This connection between women and animals for example, is not to be understood as a “natural connection- one that suggest that women and animals are essentially similar- but rather a constructed connection that has been created by patriarchal structures. This is why we set out in this study to examine the various means used by this deprived group to alter this image given to them in the past.

The struggle by women to dismantle the hierarchies in a male dominated society and show their value provided the foundation for what became a full blown feminist approach to ecology and feminism in the 1980s. The first conference to address the parallel oppression of women and nature, *Women and Environment*, was held at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1974 and was later followed by a number of other conferences. Initially, writers sought to accomplish these goals: establish the connection between feminism and ecology and show the vital role women play in the development of the society. These issues and more have made us strive to find out what pictures a writer such as Bole Butake paints of women in his works. We will also look at the ways in which these African women are gradually breaking free from disdainful cultural and patriarchal impositions.

This research endeavour aims at examining ways in which the subjugated minorities in *Lake God, The Survivors, and And Palm-wine Will Flow* are being oppressed and how they break free from this oppression. It equally seeks to examine the possibility for harmony between man,

woman and nature in making the society a better place. In view of the above stated, this research endeavour will attempt to answer the following questions:

- 1- What is the place of the woman in the plays under study?
- 2- What measures have African women taken to liberate themselves from cultural and patriarchal constructs?
- 3-How can the complementary relationship between men and women bring about progress?
- 4-How relevant are the plays *Lake God*, *The Survivor*, and *And Palm-wine Will Flow* in today's society?

The study is based on the hypothetical contention that women and nature have been dominated; but this domination cannot be completely achieved because these oppressed groups have sought measures to liberate themselves from the patriarchal structures. Consequently, they have proven to play a vital role in the evolution of the society through activities like agriculture.

This study limits itself to Bole Butake's *Lake God*, *The Survivors and*, *And Palm wine Will Flow* although it delves into the other plays in the cause of the analysis. The plays were chosen because as a Cameroonian, the author mirrors some of the socio-cultural realities of Cameroon through fiction. Therefore, the work addresses areas such as the empowerment of women, land use and management, environmental protection, and human right. In this light, these plays are thematically relevant to the scope of this dissertation as it epitomizes Ecofeminist aspects.

This work is significant as it creates awareness to the fact that there should be a balance relationship between man/woman and nature. This is because everything has its role to play in the ecosystem and the destruction of one will definitely create a vacuum. For instance, the African woman, as presented in the plays under study, plays a great role in their family and in their community: socially, politically and economically. In effect, their significance does not end at the social level of being the mother who bears children and wife who cater for the needs of her entire family. It also entails that they participate in some of the major decision taking of their communities like the "Fibuen" in *Lake God* and "Kwengong" in *And Palm-wine Will Flow*, who

becomes a liberator and a democratic activist in her community. In addition, through the rural women, these women prove that one must not be educated to contribute to nation building as they are able to take care of their families through their subsistent farming as portrayed by the women in *Lake God*. Hence, they contribute economically to the growth of their societies.

This work is equally significant in that it investigates and brings to the limelight the fact that nature is life-giving. This is evident in *Lake God* where the lake serves as water for drinking and for cultivation. Hence, it portrays that water is life. However, nature should also be respected and considered sacred because it has the power to take away human life. This is seen at the end of *Lake God* when the lake ravages the whole village. This incident brings to mind the lake Nyos disaster in the North West Region of Cameroon which Butake seems to fictionalize. The National Geographic channel also expounds this idea when they highlight on the issue of pollution. They reported that approximately 1.2 billion people lack safe drinking water and in developing countries diarrhea and associated diseases kill four million children under the age of five every year.

The work is an eye opener to the fact that there is progress in unity. In effect, the importance of both women and nature are not brought out to show how less important the man is in the society. It rather shows that combine efforts of all can lead to a better society. Thus, as much as a woman needs a man, a man needs a woman and both of them need nature in order to survive.

To shed light on double oppression of nature and women in Bole Butake's selected plays, and the evolution of women in the society, Feminism (womanism) and Ecofeminism are used to analyze the plays understudy.

Feminism is a movement which started in the 1960s and became dominant in western literary studies in the late 1970s. According to Lizbeth Goodman and Alison Smith in *Approaching Literature: Literature and Gender*, feminism can be defined as "a politics; a recognition of the historical and cultural subordination of women (the only worldwide majority to be treated as a minority), and a resolve to do something about it"(8). However, the evolution of feminism in the 19th century has given birth to various types of feminism and critical approaches such as liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, cultural feminism, radical feminism,

womanism and ecofeminism. For the purpose of this work focus shall be on Womanism and Ecofeminism.

Womanism is a term coined by Alice Walker in her collection of essays titled *In Search Of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*. It was a reaction against feminism, which was regarded as a Western concept because it did not include the problems of Black women in general and African women in particular. Therefore, Womanism recognizes the multiple oppressions of Black women wherein racial; classist and sexist oppression is identified and fought against by Womanists, as opposed to Feminists' main concern with sexist oppression. Womanism thus makes it clear that the wants of the Black women vary from those of their White counterparts, by identifying and accepting male involvement in the struggle for emancipation; it again differs from Feminism in its procedure of ending female repression. Womanism is therefore deep-rooted in Black culture which accounts for the importance of family, community and motherhood in its discourse and as an ideology has stretched beyond the boundaries of Black America to being incorporated by many women in and from Africa, and in different parts of the world.

Ruvimbo Goredema in her article "African Feminism: The African Woman's Struggle for Identity" views African Feminism as a Feminist epistemology and a form of rhetoric that has provided arguments, which validate the experience of women of Africa and of African origin against a mainstream Feminist discourse. It acknowledges the fact that African women suffer not only from sexism and patriarchal social structures but are also victims of racism, neo-colonialism, cultural imperialism, socio-economic mechanisms of oppression and dictatorial systems of government.

Womanism, therefore, developed a self-defined collective Black women's standpoint about black womanhood. Chinkwenge Ogunyetti's definition of Womanism quoted by Charles Nnolina in his article "A House Divided" views Womanism as being:

Black-centered... accomodationist. It believes in the freedom and independence of women like feminism [but], unlike radical feminism, it wants meaningful union between black women and black men, and will see to it that men will change from their sexist stand. (251)

As a result for Womanism to serve as an indigenous African gender theory, it should consist of an accommodationist method, an appreciation of the values of the male and female, an appreciation of African values, and a respect of African customs/traditions.

In this light, African women felt that African American women's view of feminism failed to cover the problems African women were facing. These issues include burning issues like poverty, young women's oppression by older women, women's oppression by co-wives or men oppressing their wives. These gave rise to the birth of another trend termed African Womanism with proponents like Chikwenye Ogunyetti and Wangira Muthoni. They protested against some of the ills of African customs like female circumcision, inheritance, widowhood and polygamy. Other African Womanist like Helen Chukuma, in "Feminism in African literature" defines feminism as a rejection of inferiority and strives for recognition. Her definition seeks to give women a sense of self as worthy, effectual and contributing human being. Hence, Womanism in general and African Womanism in particular is more apt in the development of the texts under study.

The term Ecofeminism was coined by Francois D'Eaubonne, a French feminist, in her book *Le Feminisme ou la Mort* (Feminism or Death) published in 1974. In this work, D'Eaubonne sought to describe the epic violence inflicted on women and nature as a result of male domination. Texts such as Rachael Carson's *Silent Spring*(1962), Rosemary Radford Ruether's *New Woman/ New Earth*(1975), Mary Daly's *Gyn Ecology*(1978), Susan Griffin's *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her*(1978) and Caroline Merchant's *The Death of Nature*(1980) provided the foundation for what would become a full-blown feminist approach to ecology and environmentalism in 1980. These writers in their works sought to establish the connection between feminism and ecology and, to demonstrate the inadequacies of environmental theory for not accommodating the insights of feminism.

Ecofeminism asserts that all forms of oppression are connected and that structures of oppression must be addressed in their totality. Oppression of the natural world and women by the patriarchal power structures must be examined together or neither can be confronted. In one of the first ecofeminist books, *New Woman/ New Earth*, Ruether, states:

Women must see that there can be no liberation for them and no solution to the ecological crises within a society whose fundamental

model of relationships continues to be one of domination. They must unite the demands of the women's movement with those of the ecological movement to envision a radical reshaping of the basic socioeconomic relations and the underlying values of this (modern industrial) society. (204)

Ruether makes clear a central tenet of Ecofeminism which has to do with women's concern for the natural environment. Given an environment where there is no regard for both women and nature. She calls on ecofeminist to investigate the injustices meted out to women and the natural environment in order to reshape our industrial society. This theory is thus apt for the analysis of texts that were against the destruction of the ecosphere and biosphere and the oppression of the weaker sex like Bole Butake's *Lake God, The Survivors, and And Palm-wine Will Flow*.

Ecofeminism also claims that patriarchal structures justify their dominance through categorical or dualistic hierarchies: heaven/earth, white/non-white, male/female, human/animal, and culture/nature. Established oppressive systems continue to manifest their abusive powers by reinforcing assumptions of these binaries; even making them sacred through religious and scientific constructs. Ecofeminism posits that as long as these dualisms exist like an integral component of societal structuring and justification, they will all continue to serve as starting points to justify patriarchy. Therefore, all dualisms and binary opposition forms must be dismantled otherwise humanity will remain "divided against itself", a phrase that Susan Griffin uses to describe the ideological impact of dualism in her book *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her*.

Some Ecofeminists like Caroline Merchant in her book entitled *The Death of Nature*; see the separation of culture from nature as a product of the scientific revolution. In this light, where nature was previously seen alive, with the scientific revolution and most notably the works of Francis Bacon and Rene Descartes, nature was increasingly viewed as a machine which could be analyzed, experimented with and understood through reason. As a result, this theory located animals in nature and authorized unlimited animal experimentation without anesthesia. Animals, thought to be well fashioned machines, could be tortured at will because their cries of pain were not real. According to this mindset; nature was considered dead, inert, and mechanistic.

Janice Birkeland, in *Ecofeminism: Ethics and Action*, talks about the andocentric premise. Basically, it is the interpretation of human nature that assumes the universality of a masculine model of man and its associated values. One of the important aspects to this premise is the polarization of masculine and feminine archetypes and the elevation of the so-called masculine traits and values. Attributes defined as feminine (nurturing, caring, and accommodating) are seen as disadvantageous, while those defined as masculine (competitive, dominating or calculating) are encouraged. To be masculine therefore is to engage in activities like hunting or wrestling, and to dissociate one from “feminine attributes”. This is because the woman’s body was considered too weak for such activities.

Greta Gaard and Lori Gruen’s in *Society and Nature*, hold that ecofeminist who explain separation from an economic perspective look to the Marxist insights about feudalism and the rise of capitalism as well as colonialist practices. In Europe, the enclosure of the commons and the creation of private property caused a hierarchy between land-owning lords and landless peasants. According to Engels, the development of private property also led to “the world historical defeat of the female sex”. Spreading throughout Europe eventually to Asia and Africa, this system enslaved indigenous people and captured the land for the use and profit of a few. The land and everything in it was therefore considered as man’s property, especially in Africa where women only act as tenants while the men remain the owners of land.

Vandana Shiva in *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Survival in India*, uses the term ‘maldevelopment’ to describe the introduction of Western, intensive agriculture to the ‘third world’. The Europeans saw the living conditions of Africans and Asians as total poverty and told themselves they will take on the Whiteman’s burden by bringing western civilization and industrialization to such countries. What the Europeans described as poverty was subsistence living. Indigenous were therefore deceived to cultivate cash crops so as to use it for export which they claim was going to bring about a cash flow for the people but this only led to hardship. The ‘improvements’ brought about through colonialism and development only created real material poverty.

Ecofeminist like Shiva, also hold that in the colonial plantations there was division of labor based on gender roles. Thus, the men were employed for cash by the colonizers while the women fulfilled all household duties, providing food for the whole family. The colonized were

loaned money to create modeled industries which took their natural resources like trees, the animals, the crops, and they employed indigenous people to participate in their own exploitation. Without the native tree cover, the land did not absorb the rains as well, and massive erosion began, depleting the fields of precious top soil. Ecofeminism is therefore relevant for the analysis of the plays under study because it deals with violence inflicted on women and land in a patriarchal society.

For a clear understanding of this study, it is necessary to define the key terms. The elucidation of the meanings of words such as “dismantle” and “oppression” are central to the understanding of the study.

The Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary defines dismantling as, to get rid a system or organization, usually over a period of time. Similarly the *Free Online Dictionary* shares the same view. It defines dismantling as the act of causing an organization or system to stop functioning by gradually reducing its power or purpose. These two definitions fit the purpose of the study which aims at reducing or getting rid of a system, here patriarchy.

Oppression according to *Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary* refers to a situation in which people are governed in an unfair and cruel way and prevented from having opportunities and freedom. *The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary* also defines oppression as being ruled or treated with continual injustice or cruelty. For the above study these definitions will therefore be adopted.

A good number of critics have written on the plays under study, especially on the idea of female empowerment which seems to be the central theme of the plays. However, little or nothing has been done concerning environmental protection which is one of the major preoccupation of ecofeminist. Bole Butake x-rays his concerns in the forward to *Lake God* in which he defines theatre as:

An informal tool of awakening and conscientizing people in such diverse areas as the empowerment of women, land use management, environmental protection, good management of community property, human rights and citizenship and socio economic upliftment (3).

The quotation above highlights Butake's stance for female empowerment, land use and management, environmental protection alongside other issues affecting the society. Butake in his plays strive to redeem society by exposing societal ills and proposing ways to resolve them. He falls under playwrights who believe that women have a lot to contribute to societal growth if they are given the right motivation. In an interview with Bertha Onyeme, Butake states that:

There are several types of power; there is political, religious and feminine power. And I think those are the main kind of power that I treat in my works for the most part. On the other hand, there is also economic power... power is corrupting and power does corrupt. Especially when it comes to political and economic power, they seem to go hand in hand. (65-66).

The quotation above brings to light Butake's concern for the misuse of power. The misuse of power under the present work falls under patriarchal domination. This is because, the men are the holders of power since they are considered superior to both women and nature thus, nature and women are supposed to adhere to male dictates. The zeal to have domination and maintain this power pushes men to impose laws to ensure that their position is not threatened.

George Nyamndi in "The Cattle in Lake God: Symbolism and Meaning", stipulates:

(...) the village's worldview is informed by aged old male prejudices. Men are still the custodian of communal authority. Women for their part are still very much adjuncts, they are basically to bring forth children, feed the home, and satisfy the men's sexual indulgences. (230)

Nyamndi in the quotation above portrays the restrictive role assigned to women in *Lake God*. In the play men are given absolute authority, while the women are subjected to male dictates and caprices. It is due to this restrictive role assigned to the woman that Butake presents women who debunk this traditional role and come out of their shells to aid in nation building. To support this claim, Tala Kashim in an article entitled "Economic Individualism and Class Consciousness in Butake's *Lake God*", blames the material condition of the oppressed people on bourgeois capitalism and reactionary chauvinism. According to Tala, women who ought to participate in

developing the society are relegated to the back while some greedy men are made rulers. This study is in line with what Tala Kashim says concerning the plight of women.

Worth noting is the fact that Butake's emancipated woman is not superior to man. Butake, probably, because of his cultural origin, does not consider women superior to men but believes she has great potentials which can help in making the society a better place for all if given the chance. It is in this light that John NkemngongNkengasong in an article entitled "Butake and Aristophanes: Libidinal Strategies and the Politics of the Traditional Woman":

(...) questions whether it is ethical or not for the traditional woman, to deploy their libido as a political strategy. Approached from Sigmund Freud's theory of sexuality, the stance in this essay is that circumstances of global concern compel the traditional woman to stake her sacred self as a last resort to avert the catastrophes which threaten the very basis of human existence of which she is custodian. (1)

In the article, Nkengasong highlights the use of libidinal strategies by the women in Butake's plays as a last resort to avert political prejudices. His assertions on the women in the plays points to the fact that the women are self-assertive and go to any extent to promote nation building. Such female revolutionary tendencies are acknowledged and appreciated in the present work. However, the libidinal strategies used by the women in *Lake God* are attempts to draw the attention of their husbands to their plight.

Nkengasong in the same article above affirms that Butake gives preference to traditional African women activists who are ready to go to any limit just to liberate their society. He opines:

His preference is the traditional woman whose interest do not divert from issues affecting the global society. She integrates unity of purpose, unity of action and unity in achievement as the accompanying force in her libidinal strategies. She is the example the modern African woman has to emulate if her feminist campaigns must have a sense of value, if her influence in politics of the day must be felt and felt greatly. (20)

In the quotation above, Nkengasong highlights Butake's preference for the exploits of traditional African woman. This criticism alludes to the present work as it valorizes women who through their efforts have helped in the growth of their societies for instance, the female cult 'fibuen' in *Lake God*.

Butake in his plays, project women with the absence of a strong academic experience. This is a fact which Egodi Uchendu considers as a hindrance to the exploits of revolutionary women. Writing about the illiteracy of Igbo women in Nigeria, Uchendu in an article entitled "Culture: The Obstacle to Active Female Participation in Governance Among the Igbo of Nigeria" opines that " Illiteracy, poverty and colonial experience among other factors have been blamed for the generally poor participation of the African woman in politics"(90). Butake, however, in his plays clear Uchendu's doubts above by projecting women, who in spite of their poverty and illiteracy, still actively participate in instituting a democratic society.

In an article written by Anne Tanyi-Tang which is entitled "Women and National Politics; A Study of Butake's *And Palm-wine Will Flow* and Gilbert Doho's *Le Crane*", she analyzes the active role played by women in liberating their society from a tyrannical ruler. She goes ahead to demonstrate how the women succeed where men have failed in political issues like killing the Fon and proposing a democratic way of choosing future rulers and ruling the society. This work agrees with Tanyi-Tang that women in *And Palm-wine Will Flow* have great potentials and actively participate to defeat the exploitative ruler and reform their village. However unlike Tanyi-Tang's view of the total overthrow of men, we see Butake as an author who in this play seeks a world where men and women work together for the good of the society.

The failure of detrimental patriarchy is also brought out by Peter Abety in an article entitled "Contemporary Drama: Bole Butake Blast Brazen Praise Singers in *And Palm-wine Will Flow*". Here, he brings out a number of problems raised in the play and notes that the downfall of the Fon is partially due to the fact that he is surrounded by male "hand clappers" who do not tell the truth about his tyrannical rule and the repercussions. At the end, the Fon's failure, as viewed in this work, comes as a result of his underestimation of the strength of the womenfolk in his village. Ironically, this underestimation of the strength of a woman is what causes his death.

In Eunice Ngongkum's "Drama and the Revolutionary Vision: Bate Besong's *Beast of No Nation* and Bole Butake's *Lake God*", she supports the Marxist view that each society is

stratified with those in power oppressing the masses. This is the case in *Lake God*, where the hybrid Fon Joseph- who has been converted to Christianity- no longer listens to the cries of his people. Ngongkum, therefore quotes Peter Abety who views the Fon as a representation of post colonial leaders “who allow themselves to be directed by white men in foreign capitals. These leaders do not hearken to the aspirations of their people in the same way as the Fon ignores the ‘Kwifon’” (268).

Still in the above article, Eunice Ngongkum throws more light on the selfishness of the Fon who refuses to solve the problem between the women and cattle grazers. In spite of the destruction done to the crops of the women by the cattle, he stays adamant because he owns part of the cattle which is his main source of income. Hence, showing the individualistic nature of the Fon.

Naomi Epongse Nkealah in her PhD thesis entitled “Challenging Hierarchies in Anglophone Cameroon Literature: Women, Power and Visions of Change in Bole Butake’s Plays”, castigates the negative image given to the woman in earlier Cameroonian fiction. She counters this by choosing works which valorise and empower the woman to bring out the indispensable role of the woman in promoting political, economic and social growth in the society. Naomi quotes the Feminist critic, Nana Wilson-Tagoe, speaking about African literature in general, and draws a pertinent distinction between female representations in men’s writing and that in women’s writing:

While in earlier reconstructions of colonial society in the works of male writers, women characters often appeared fixed in roles that remained unproblematized. The works of the early women writers countered fixed images of women through narrative strategies in which their women characters appeared in shifting and seemingly contradicting poses, giving the writers leeway to present them as complex and subtle.(6)

She likened this representation of women in fixed roles to early Anglophone Cameroon writing in which female characters tend to play minor roles and to conform to stereotypical images of feminine behaviour: *The Prostitute* (MbellaSonneDipoko); the “Con Woman” (Victor ElameMusinga); *The Adulterous Wife* (NsandaEba); and *The Rebellious Virgin* (Joseph AnchangnayuohNgongwikuo).(7)The advent of writers such as Butake therefore brought another

generation of writers to the lime light and Anglophone writing began to reflect recognition for women's activities within and beyond the family circle.

From the above analysis, one can draw that a lot has been said and written by critics about Bole Butake's literary production and visions. It can be concluded from this review of works related to the plays being studied that these plays call for the need for the valorization and empowerment of women. This is because due to value hierarchies they have been placed under the man thus the man becomes the privileged self and the woman the devalued other. However, this work distinguishes itself from the works reviewed because it shows how the woman has been given colloquial names that associate with nature. In a patriarchal world where the woman is treated as a second class citizen and oppressed by the male gender, this automatically means, there is double oppression of women and nature. This work therefore, illuminates how this double oppression and how the oppressed class rises from this oppressed system to be in control. The work also sheds light on the importance of the oppressed group in the society and how their join efforts (with man) can help the society.

The work is made up of an introduction to the study, four chapters, and a conclusion. The General introduction comprises a brief background to the study; the research problem; the purpose and significance of the study; the research questions that the work seeks to answer; the hypothesis; the scope of the study; the theoretical framework; the definition of key terms; the review of literature related to the study; and the structure of the work. Chapter One has as title "The Image of the Woman: From a Historical Perspective ". Since nature is feminized the oppression of women automatically means the oppression of nature. Thus, this chapter discusses how the woman has always been pushed to the peripheries and how she is represented in a patriarchal society. Chapter Two entitled "The Supremacy of the Female body sheds light on how the woman has risen from her position of the other to become the centre. She dismantles stereotypes by moving from "the kitchen" which was considered the place of the woman to taking up socio political activities in the society. Chapter Three on its part, shows the importance of the woman in the society and what the society stands to gain if the potentials of women are recognized by the men. This chapter is captioned "Progress in Complementality". Lastly Chapter Four highlights the pedagogic significance of Bole Butake's *Lake God, The Survivor, and And Palm-wine Will Flow*. To round off, the conclusion of the work states some findings of the research and makes suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PLACE OF THE AFRICAN WOMAN: FROM A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Throughout the ages, humanity has lived with the assumption that male is supreme. For this reason, man has thought it his divine right to subject other creatures, that is, woman and nature, to his rule. This idea of superiority which can be termed as a myth has given rise to the marginalization of the 'other'. In effect, this myth has been subtly and richly infused in all continents and Africa is no different from this view. Thus, no matter how much man tries to reshape these images of our feeling, this myth is very difficult to dislodge. This chapter examines how the woman is regarded and the role ascribed to her by the man in the African society to maintain her inferior position.

The dualism of self/other, whereby the man is the privileged self and the woman and nature the devalued other seems to have been established by God. According to the Judeo-Christian religion, God created man and later the woman from his ribs and gave him total control to name her and the other animals. It was, therefore, God's will that man exploits nature for his proper ends, hence establishing dominance over them. This myth of superiority therefore has nothing to do with lack of intelligence, nor one's origin in class. It is deeper and more natural. This explains why patriarchy is a universal phenomenon and not just an issue of a particular race. As seen even in the Bible and other Greek mythologies, for example, Aristophane's *Lysistrata*. Aristophane's delineates in this work how Greek societies imposed standards of decorum that clearly restricted a woman to specific roles. Commenting on the 4th century of the Greek society Charles Gulick, states that "every woman of good family was under the guardianship of a man". (56). In *Lysistrata*, the heroine sums the plight of the woman thus, "our sex is fitly food for tragic poets/ our whole life's but a pile of kisses and babies" (292).

In the works of some male African writers women have been given fixed roles. This misrepresentation of the woman can be traced as far back to the works of some Anglophone Cameroonian writers who ascribed roles such as prostitute, con woman and adulterous wife to women. This was in a bit to show that the woman is nothing but an object of pain, deceit and destruction. Although Bole Butake, in *Lake God and Other Plays*, gives the woman a voice and

empowers her, he also shows the types of roles ascribed to the women by the men of the society. Mboysi in *The Survivors* is portrayed as a prostitute because she gives herself to Officer so as to get food and the other basic needs of the other survivors. This stereotypical role is no different assigned to Michelle and Martina in *The Rape of Michelle*. Since Martina is a single mother she is already categorized as a prostitute. This is because the norms of the society shun at women who have children out of wedlock. Hence, such women like Rufina are not regarded in a positive light. In fact, her daughter's waywardness is blamed on her. This is a very common belief in our African societies wherein single mothers are considered as women who flirt and sleep around with men and the result is usually a wayward daughter.

In the same light, when women are not given stereotypical images, they are given minor roles or mainly projected as shadows in the works of African male writers. In effect, this phenomenon is clearly represented by giving the woman no voice in their works. We can only feel their presence and not their actions. Hence, the oxymoronic term 'absented presence'. The analysis of this term in Butake's plays is used to refer to four types of female characters. Firstly, those that are mentioned by other characters but never get to appear in the plays or never seen performing any roles. Secondly, those that are assigned roles to in the plays but perform them offstage. Thirdly, those that get to appear in the play but are in most part silent, that is, they are seen but not heard. Finally, those that although seen and heard, remain stereotypes created to spread a particular gender ideology. In *Shoes and Four in Arms*, women's presence is limited to shrill voices that grieve over their woes from a far off destination. The women are simply absent from the fictional reality of the text. Where they are present like in *Dance of the Vampires* their role is far from being inspirational, for they feature as partners in a political game in which the quest for supreme power eliminates all other human concerns. Women are also "absented presences" in these plays because they are not only passive and voiceless for the most part but also effectively powerless since their actions are more reactive than proactive.

One of the tools which have also been used in subordinating the female in a patriarchal society is language. Through the metaphors of language, phrases such as the 'rape of nature', 'mother nature', and 'virgin forest' as well as colloquialisms for women such as 'pussy', 'bitch', 'old hen', 'sow', and the like has served to animalize the woman as well as feminize nature. Thus, the twin domination of both women and nature since nature is given feminine attributes

and everything associated to it is inferior. Butake exemplifies this twin domination in *Lake God* when we find Shey Bo-Nyo, the diviner and priest of the community, calling out the Fon's guards who bundled him out of the palace as "sons of bitches and prostitutes, sons of whores" (9). Looking at the insults levied on the guards the one question that comes to mind is why bitches, prostitutes and whores not dogs or other names referring to the male? This is to show how the woman is subjugated in a patriarchal society. These insults do not really have a bearing on the guards who are insulted but points back to their mothers as whores that is sexually immoral women. Similarly, this ideology runs in *The Rape of Michelle*, when Michelle is addressed by Mikindong as "daughter of a bitch" (192).

In the same light, the animalization of women has also been implored by patriarchal structures to show their subhuman status. This can be seen in *Lake God* when Lagham addresses one of his wives as "that mother rat whom I recently bought with my money". In effect, Lagham addressing his wife as a mother rat does not only point to the fact that she is considered as subhuman but as a property which can be bought with money, hence, his possession. This view is not so different in *The Survivors* where Mboysi is treated no less than an animal which serves only in satisfying officers animalistic desires. In the play, Officer always uses a spray to disinfect her whenever she comes to see him in his tent.

(On Mboysi's entrance he proceeds to disinfect her.)

Mboysi: Why do you insult me so officer?

Officer: Oh woman! I do not insult you. I am only taking precaution the outside world must not be contaminated.

Mboysi: So we are contaminated, are we? So I am unclean, am I?

Officer: (indicating spray) After this you are no longer contaminated. Oh woman, come into my arms and cool my heart.

Mboysi: Only on one condition.

Officer: What? What condition?

Mboysi: That you never use that thing on me again. It makes me feel sub-human. Unclean. You use me like a horse, Officer. This horse has feelings. (p.80)

The plight of the woman is evident from this extract as we see her not treated more or less than a sub human as Mboysi remarks herself. She equates this treatment given to her to that of a horse which is not just an animal but one of the most “used” animals. This is because the horse has been used by man as a beast of burden. Nowadays, it is used in games where men place their bets on them in a race to see which wins. The woman is therefore animalized by the same ideological process in order to make their subordination seem more natural.

In Janis Birkeland’s article, “Ecofeminism: Linking Theory and Practice”, she expounds on the idea that nature and women are regarded by men as existing to serve their physical needs. This underwrites instrumentalism, whereby things are valued only to the extent to which they are useful to man. The reason for a woman’s existence was therefore to serve and satisfy the man’s needs in every way. This can be exemplified in *The Survivors* where the woman is seen only as an instrument to satisfy a man’s sexual urge. The excerpt below clearly illuminates this:

Ngujoh: We can get him to negotiate. With Mboysi’s cooperation.

Mboysi: What do you mean? With my cooperation?

Ngujoh: You can speak to him in the language he understands, having been a teacher in our school. Moreover you are a woman with great charms.

Old one: Oh hoo! A woman will soften the hardest heart.

Ngujoh: Especially the heart of officer. (p.64)

Mboysi is asked by the Old man and Ngujoh to go can give her body to officer so as to free them and fend for their needs as the excerpt explains. The woman is therefore sent to commit the very act which is considered a taboo by the men who address them as “whores”. Nevertheless, before Mboysi sells herself to Officer for food, water and clothes, she asks the men a very critical question about Officer: “*How do I ask him? If you, men, have failed to convince another man,*

can a poor woman do?" This question brings to limelight the fact that the woman was considered incapable of handling any situation or problem by the man. Thus, it was the place of the man to decide and look for solutions on the issues or problems faced in a community. Mboysi therefore uses this sarcasm to remind the men of the role that has been ascribed to her kind. It is only later when Mboysi realizes that she had been used that she laments that *"so your intention was to trade me for your salvation"* (66). This brings to limelight the fact that the woman is given no value as she is only considered as an item that can be traded in exchange for something else.

In addition, Butake further expounds on how the woman is not only objectified but itemized by the men in *Lake God*. When the women take action against the male folk for not taking action against the Fon and the cattle grazers who let their cattle destroy their corn, there is chaos in the land. This is because this action entailed not satisfying their husbands either with food or with sex. The men are annoyed and can no longer hide their frustration.

Forgwei: You too Lagham? You mean the women have decided to starve us their men?

Lagham: How can a man use his wealth to buy trouble for himself? This morning I called mom, that mother rat whom I recently bought with my money, and asked her to make sure my dish of foo-foo was ready when I returned from the bush... (27).

From this excerpt there are four things one can draw from Lagham's statement. Firstly, when he poses the rhetorical question that *"how can a man use his wealth to buy trouble for himself?"* He is therefore insinuating that he sees his wife no differently from any of his other goods or object which he possesses that is why he is so vexed by her action. This is as a result of the African culture of paying a "bride price". This phenomenon does not only dehumanize some women but also make them the property of the man as illustrated in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Secondly, when Lagham goes as far as calling his wife a "mother rat" this does not dehumanize the woman but animalize her, hence the twin oppression of women and nature. Thirdly, Lagham's recurrent use of the personal pronoun 'my' also brings to limelight the idea of possession where the men see themselves as the owners of the land and everything that resides in it. And lastly, the entire statement points to the fact that his wife whom he had asked to prepare

his “foo-foo” had not done anything to that effect. This statement also goes to show the role of the traditional African woman as seen in *Lake God* whose role is to provide food for her family.

One of the prominent roles of the woman in patriarchal society is child bearing. Accordingly, a woman who is incapable of bearing children is considered useless in such a society. Bareness is the worst affliction a couple can endure. But with the African tradition, the man is void of all blames and the woman carries all the blame. Some women are even accused to be witches for not being able to have children not forgetting that the man could also be impotent or sterile. In addition, even when some women are only able to have girls and no boys they are still rejected by their husbands as well as the society. In effect, women were only compared to fields which will gestate and bear male fruits. The elevation of the role of the male child to the female here is therefore evident. This ill treatment of women is apparent in *Lake God* where Angela is persecuted for not being able to have a child.

The oppressed group is also subjected to exploitation in the name of scientific progress by the valued self. As Lori Gruen points out in her article “Dismantling Oppression: An Analysis of the Connection between Women and Animals”, that while the risk of childbirth are specific to females, the risk associated with contraception can be borne by both men and women. Yet, it is primarily females both humans and non-humans that are subjected to risks in contraceptive research which is controlled by male dominated pharmaceutical companies. Most of the times, third world countries suffer most because even when some of these research has been carried out on animals and fail, these companies in the Western world still go ahead to sell these contraceptives to make profit. US contraceptive companies have history of allowing harmful contraceptive products to be marketed even after animals have been harmed by them. G.D. Searle, for example, consistently released fraudulent data about the safety of oral contraceptives. As a result because women and animals are judged incapable of understanding science, they are relegated to the position of passive objects their sufferings and death are to be tolerated in the name of profit and progress.

Drawing parallels between the domination of land and the domination of men over women, ecofeminist examine these hierarchical gendered relationships, in which the land is often equated with the feminine, seen as fertile resources, and the property of man. This is very common in third world countries as seen in the text where man believes that the land belongs to

him. In essence, the woman is only considered a tenant who rents the land and can be evicted at any time. The role of the woman, therefore, was to farm and provide for her family while the man preoccupies himself with issues of the land which the woman can supposedly not handle. This is what opines in *Lake God* when the women take action on issues concerning the land, the men feel their positions have been compromised.

Maimo: Where is the foo-foo? I asked. Kimbong laughed again and said cattle had destroyed everything. Before I knew what I was doing I had given her a sound slap in the face... my wife wiped the tears from her face, looked straight into mine and said to me in a cold voice that if I really wanted to eat foo-foo, I should go to Ngangba and make the cattle leave the land instead of beating up a poor defenseless woman who has been fighting all her life to feed her husband and children (29-30).

The place of the woman as the second class citizen whose efforts and hard work are not recognized by the land owners is evident from this excerpt. Also, the women are made to understand that their role is just to farm on this land owned by men to feed the family but she is not allowed to make decisions in this land of men. This can be seen in the excerpt below in Yensi's speech to the women:

Yensi: We are now going to disperse and go back to our homes. And if your man should ask you what is going on, ask him if women ever know what is happening in this land of men. May our enterprise succeed. E-chong e-chong e-chong e-chongoo!

Yensi addressing the land as "the land of men" clearly expounds the saying that "it is a man's world". This is because the major decisions of the land are taken in meetings where the women are forbidden from being part of, like the Kwifon. In consequence, the woman's ideas are not important and she is weak hence, not capable of handling any case. This is why the oath of sealed lips taken by the women, which Yensi in this excerpt urges them not to discuss with their husbands, greatly angers the men. It is to this effect that Forgwei one of the patriarchs of the land wonders at the fact that "*who gave such powers to women?*" Hence, this reinforces the patriarchal notion that women are powerless and incapable of any action. It also points to the fact that women are not supposed to take any action without the permission of men.

Furthermore, the woman has also been considered incapable of handling political issue because she is considered irrational, emotional and has imaginary ideas. In effect, the woman is believed to have childish ideas which are usually not realistic. Ngege, in *The Rape of Michelle* makes this clear in his statement that “a girl is a woman and a woman is a girl” (177). The image of a child used in reference to a woman is therefore deliberate. This association of women with children is a reflection of society’s placing of women at the lowest rung of the ladder of mental development, with traits of irrationality, impulsiveness and irresponsibility tied close to children’s and thus women’s actions. By implication, women are portrayed as grown up children.

In the same light, the woman has been confined to the domestic sphere where one of her primary roles is to provide food. Like Kimbong, Maimo’s wife and the other women in *Lake God* who are in charge of providing food for their husbands and children. Certain animals have also been domesticated and forced to provide food in a different sense. Women prepare and cook; animals are prepared and cooked. Both play subservient roles in the male dominated institutions of meat eating. This is why Maimo is frustrated and angry when he finds out there is no foo-foo to eat with his delicious hare which he had caught and prepared in a soup.

The practice of meat eating does not only relegate women to a particular physical sphere –the kitchen and its equivalence - but also, as Carol Adams has forcefully argued, places women in a specifically constructed social space. She notes:

People with power have always eaten meat.... Dietary habits proclaim class distinction, but they proclaim patriarchal distinctions as well. Women, second-class citizens, are more likely to eat what are considered to be second-class food in a particular culture: vegetables, fruits, and grains rather than meat. The sexism in meat eating recapitulates the class distinction with an added twist: the mythology that meat is a masculine food, and meat eating, a male activity. (150)

Men as those in power eat meat and their consumption of flesh perpetuates this power. In the hierarchy of consumption men are at the top and women are below and the more than five billion animals in the United States that are intensively reared, dismembered, packaged, and sold are

lowered still. This activity was also common in the African setting as the game from hunting was meant to be cooked for the head of the house and he decides with whom to share just as we see in *Lake God*. The small hare which Maimo hunts is used to cook his soup which he calls “my dish”. This is to show that this dish of his is special and different from the one of the household. This phenomenon is common in the North West province, as they are certain dishes which are meant just for the men. For instance the myth of the ‘fowl gizzard’ stipulated that under no circumstance should the woman eat the gizzard of the fowl as it was meant for the man. Though women, nowadays, eat the gizzard. This phenomenon is extant in most communities in the grasslands.

In *The Survivors* the Officer also shows his authority through the meat eating activity as evident in the stage directions: “Officer’s tent lavishly set as in previous episode. As usual, he is eating big chunks of meat and washing it down with red wine or whisky. His revolver is placed prominently on the table at which he is sitting.”(80) This image of the officer eating big chunks of meat and washing it down with wine or whiskey can be symbolical to a hunter’s victory over the hunted. The hunted here not only represent the animal he is eating but the woman in this case Mboysi thus the idea of double suppression. Also the fact that Rufina’s customers in her chicken parlour are mainly men too x-rays this view of meat eating as a means of showing man’s dominion over woman and animal.

The woman in a typical African society was also presented as one who is faceless and nameless. She does not have a definite status as she can only be identified through a man. The man was considered as the owner of the “other” and will use them only in satisfying his selfish gains. Butake portrays the selfish interest of the male folk as represented by their leaders. The ruler in *Lake God*, Fon Joseph, does not care about the women’s plight when they come to complain about the cattle grazers who allowed their cattle to feed on their crops. The Fon does nothing about it because his cattle are among those owned by Dewa, one of the cattle grazers. Consequently, if he sends the cattle away just as the women demanded, he will be at the losing end. He also sees the women as voiceless and incapable of taking up any action against him. In like manner, the Fon in *And Palm Wine Will Flow* does not listen to the plight of the people who suffer under his tyrannical rule. He is surrounded by male “hand clappers” who cannot tell him the truth about his tyrannical rule and the repercussions.

Masculinity is measured by power as well as distance from the “feminine”. And because masculinity is linked to powerfulness and autonomy, dependency and powerlessness are procured as marks of inferiority and grounds for unequal treatment according to Janice Birkeland in “Ecofeminism: Linking Theory and Practices”. In the words of Bertrand de Jouvenel “A man feels himself more of a man when he is imposing himself and making the others the instruments of his will which gives them incomparable pleasure”. This is exactly what obtains in *The Survivors*. The Officer derives pleasure keeping the survivors of the lake disaster under him so as to exercise control over them and enjoy the benefits provided for them by the government and well wishers. The men in *Lake God* are also annoyed when the women take up action against them because they feel their position as the head is being threatened.

Throughout history, women’s sexuality has been seen as dangerous and has been treated with distrust, suspicion and, sometimes, disdain. This can be traced as far back from the book of Genesis in the Bible which recounts the fall of man from grace which is occasioned by Eve. The woman was therefore considered as a threat, a dangerous temptress and an auxiliary of Satan. Besides Eve, there is Delilah who seduces her husband Samson into revealing the secret of his supernatural strength and she eventually betrays him to the Philippians and he is destroyed. Then, Jezebel portrayed as the mother of all harlots who tries to destroy the prophet Elijah and Judith who uses her feminine charm to seduce and destroy the enemies of Israel. All these images and more have culminated into what is termed the “femme fatal”. A French phrase that literally describes a dangerous woman capable of wrecking a man’s life and from whom every sane man should keep away from. In *The Rape of Michelle*, both Michelle and Rufina are foregrounded by their “evil activities” as “daughters of Eve”: they are sexual predators, lustful creatures, scheming witches, destructive forces and vindictive elements. Butake portrays this by showing how they both fight and vie for the attention of men in the chicken parlour, especially Mikindong. When he does not succeed in getting Mikindong, they have the police arrest and lock him up for rape.

Butake also presents the libidinal strategy as a common tool used by the “femme fatale” in getting whatever she wants. Thus, she tries to achieve her hidden purpose by using feminine wiles such as beauty, charm and sexual allure. This is what obtains in *Lake God* when the “fibuen” deny their husbands food and sex until they go and mount pressure on the Fon to send

away the nomads. The result is positive as the men are usually unable to hold their urge for sexual gratification. Mboysi in *The Survivors* is also presented to have used her body or the self in satisfying the Officer so as to be able to gain provisions for the other survivor. Similarly, this idea is also evident in John Nkemngong's *Across the Mongolo*, as the author presents Shirila as a prostitute who uses her beauty in dating men like Monsieur Abesolo. He therefore furnishes her house and takes care of everything she needs in exchange for sexual favours. This misogynistic attitude of male writers is therefore a call for concern, as it brings to mind the question, can anything good actually come out from a woman?

In *The Rape of Michelle*, the woman is portrayed as a temptress and manipulator, hence the devil's advocate. This is the image given of Michelle which can be alluded to Potiphar's wife in the Bible. The play seems to echo the injustice suffered by Joseph at the hands of Potiphar's wife. The biblical account reports that Joseph who was the servant of Potiphar had found favour in his master's eyes such that he made him overseer of his household. He was second to Potiphar himself, but a disjuncture in the relationship between Potiphar and Joseph was soon created by Potiphar's wife when apparently she tried to have sex with Joseph who refuses and fled her room leaving behind his garment. This garment was later used by Potiphar's wife as substantial evidence against this assault to put Joseph in prison. The biblical narrative portrays Joseph as God-fearing, hardworking young man victimized by a cunning lustful daughter of the first temptress, Eve. Michelle appears to embody the Potiphar's wife pattern as she not only attempts to have sexual relations with Mikindong but also lays claims of rape when her attempts are unsuccessful. Michelle therefore, epitomizes the notion of the "femme fatale" who is capable of wrecking a man's life.

Without subjecting the Bible to a feminist study, it is important to mention that its depiction of women often conforms to certain binaries such as moral/immoral, virgin/prostitute, innocent/guilty, forgive/vengeful that are designed on giving clear prescriptions on qualities that make a good or bad woman. A good example is found in Proverbs 7: 1-27. The entire chapter is a strong warning to men to guard against the prostitute woman whose mission is to entice and destroy. Woman is described in these verses as boisterous, sly, deceptive, murderous, seductive, unfaithful to her husband, disgraceful to her sex, and definitely treacherous to the general male population. In contrast to these qualities of a bad woman, Proverbs 31:10-20 describes the good

woman as one who performs her wifely duties with diligence: cooks, cleans, and works hard in the fields; learns a trade to generate income for the household; shuns the talkative and lazy life style of other women. Therefore, a good woman's attributes are outlined exclusively in relation to her usefulness within the domestic space no meaning is attached to her life beyond the fulfilling of her culturally prescribed roles of wife, mother and sister. This is why Rufina's chicken parlor business which is one of the ways through which Cameroonian women sought to become economically self-reliant, thereby breaking the role that traditional patriarchy had on them through male control of financial resources, is castigated by the men.

In addition, in *The Rape of Michelle*, Zende's words echo the writer's thoughts on acceptable models of female behavior. A woman's dressing and grooming is expected to conform to society's expectations of her. Because Rufina bore a child in her teenage years, she becomes a transgressor of her society's values. The play does not outrightly call her prostitute; but implies that she is one because she fails to meet up to the ideal of a "good" woman. She is therefore projected as a negative model for her daughter as Zende notes:

Zende: [...] This little girl is not as little as my learned colleague has made this court to believe. I am inviting this court to look at her carefully: her dress, her gait, her manners. I am also inviting this court to look at her mother. Michelle's birth certificate says her mother was seventeen when she had her. michelle herself is fourteen this year. Rufina has brought up her own daughter in her own footsteps. We have a saying that when mother-cow is chewing grass, its young ones watch its mouth closely (195).

In the quotation above, Zende uses the analogy of a calf that learns from its mother how to eat grass in order to project Michelle's assumed moral deterioration as a direct consequence of her own mother's "moral bankruptcy". The analogy, therefore, suggests that Michelle's precocious sexuality is the result of her careful observation of her mother's antics. Hence, like mother like daughter scenario.

This chapter has sought to show the oppressive forms perpetuated by patriarchal systems on the woman in the society. It has examined the link between the oppression of women and nature and the role played by patriarchy in maintaining this oppression. Using ecofeminist and

womanist concepts, the chapter has examined the various ways through which the woman has been misrepresented by using negative connotations, through violence as well as the image created of her in the works of some writers and even the Bible. Faced with these challenges, women drawing their strength from nature, have taken steps to free themselves patriarchal domination, while at the same time re-asserting their identities. This will be our focus in the chapter that follows.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SUPREMACY OF THE FEMALE BODY

Despite the oppressive measures that have been used by men to subjugate women as observed in Chapter One, the woman has striven to break free from the bonds of patriarchal culture. Whether as housewives, farmers, educated or uneducated, women have begun to advocate the need to be recognized as persons in their own right, entitled to respect and fulfilment in every aspect of life. Slowly but surely, they have struggled to overcome conventional stereotypes and gender bias. Most importantly, they have over the years, proven their worth by protesting actively against the governance of men, thereby disproving the notion that they are the weaker sex or second class citizens. This chapter, therefore, focuses on the new place of the African woman in *Lake God*, *The Survivors*, and *And Palm-wine Will Flow* as defenders of the land and nature as a whole. It, therefore, finds out and brings to light, how the woman has used the roles given to her- child-bearer, cooks and servants- to prove that she is an indispensable factor in societal growth.

In situations of persistent political instability, women have been able to keep secrets and act in unity to restore order which is not necessarily by violence. Butake has not left this out in *Lake God*. Women have shown that the best strategy to revolt is not necessarily by violence. Frustrated by the silence and nonchalant attitude of the men towards their plight, to protect their crops and safe their land from possible damage, the women gather around the village square to take the oath of sealed lips officiated by Ma Kusham. By this oath, they resolve to starve their men or husbands both physically and sexually until the latter see reason and resolve to help them. The following excerpt sheds more light on this:

Ma kusham: ... (she dips her hands into the pot and takes out broom-sticks of equal length which she proceeds to distribute to all the women). These brooms have been cooked in the most potent medicines and herbs in the land. However the most important ingredient as far as our oath is concerned comes from the sacred pot of the lake god which Shey Bo- Nyo guards jealously... Now, listen. Hold the stick in your right hand between the thumb and fore-finger like this. Cross your lips vertically with

the stick like this. Break it in the middle and throw both ends behind you while repeating the following: if my mouth discloses what my ears have heard in this gathering, may my tongue swell and feel my mouth with dumbness. (p.25)

This extract is a clear example of how women draw their power from nature to fight against patriarchal systems in their societies. Ma Kusham in her speech makes mention of the fact that the brooms she has just shared to the women have been cooked in the most potent medicines and herbs in the land. It is worth noting that these brooms are made from palm fronts as common with the people of the grass field. In addition, she implicitly highlights the potency of the African medicine and herbs which also made from grass, trees and roots. This is to show the harmony between women and nature to fight against oppressive systems.

After the ritual is performed Yensi urges the women not to disclose whatever has happened among them. This action by the women therefore shows their unity and harmony that exist among them as well as the determination to eradicate the ills of the land. It is as a result of the action of the women that some of the men, Lagham, Fisey, Forgwei and Maimo sit in a raffia bush and narrate the ordeals they are facing as a result of the women's strike. While patriarchs like Forgwei lament on the aspect of food which they have been deprived of by their wives as it is the role of every traditional woman in the African set up, others like Lagham address another issue which to him is more serious as he says:

Lagham: If it were only the hunger of the stomach, one can browse here and there like cattle. For almost a week now I have lived on palm-wine or roasted cocoyams or plantain, that is not food, but it is something. But it looks like they are also making use of their other weapon, hunger of the loins.

Forgwei: No! That is not possible. Just not possible. Just not possible! I will kill someone.

The other weapon which Lagham mentions is the libidinal weapon, which as the conversation above suggests, seems to be more the most crushing of the two weapons. Forgwei's exclamation reveals the tremendous libidinal strategy on the men. This places them on the brink of collapse as Maimo further insinuates: "I don't think I can stay another two days without eating foo-foo or feeling the warm smell of my wife" (31). Maimo's statement shows that even the fixed roles

women were given by the men is of utmost importance. The women make them realize this by refusing to perform these roles. It is on this note that the men resolve on an emergency to see the Kwifon to influence the Fon to look for a solution to the women's problem and to appease the lake god to save the imminent tribulations.

The female, as opposed to being the weaker sex and disabled, has rather proven to be ambassadors of justice in the political scenario of the African society. The silent suffering masses come to rely solely on the women who take the leading responsibility for their liberation. This sudden and unexpected resurgence of the woman in the political field and her overwhelming success is intriguing and new to an audience that has, for a very long time, minimized and denigrated the women to secondary and or subsidiary roles. It is against this backdrop that, the "Anlu", a women's group among the Kom in the grass fields region of Cameroon came into being. The general consensus among the sources consulted is that the traditional "anlu" referred to disciplinary action taken against men (and sometimes women) who committed offenses of a sexual nature against women (Ardene, 1975:35, Nkwi, 1985:37, Chilve, 1992:144) such offenses include the beating of a pregnant woman, the impregnating of a pregnant mother within two years after the birth of her child, the insulting of a woman's genitals, the verbal and physical abuse of an old woman and the sexual violation of a female family member. They later played a great role in politics of 1958 when they became the main tool used by Jua's KNDP (Kamerun National Democratic Party against the notorious KNC (Kamerun National Congress) led by Endeley's government. The main point of conflict was the government injunction which tried to change the style of making ridges in the then Kom farming method. The government had stipulated that to prevent erosion the women should farm vertically as the horizontal method they used was tantamount to an erosion. The women understood this as a plot to sell their farms to Endeley and revolted. We therefore see the women moving towards an autonomous, self determining life without men in such a tense political climate.

Talking about justice and the fight against injustice on womanhood in Butake's *Lake God, The Survivors, and And Palm wine Will Flow* the one question that always comes to mind is "where are the men?" The men have been exiled, incarcerated, or totally emasculated. The Fibuen just like the Anlu are able to do what their men have attempted to do to no avail. In *Lake God*, when Dewa's cattle destroy the crops of the women, they are frustrated and expect help from

their husbands and the authorities of the land. When this help fails to come, they do not hesitate to take up action by binding Dewa's hands and legs putting him on a stretcher and taking him to the Fon's palace for justice to be served. This action, which is the first of its kind in such a society where women are powerless, surprises people. In Shey Tanto's discussion with Shey Bo-Nyo, he expresses this surprise as seen in the following lines:

Tanto: The Fulani man whose cattle have been destroying crops in the land. This time the women tied him with ropes on bamboo and carried him to the palace.

SheyBo-Nyo: The gods are still alive! Is that what happened? (20)

Shey Bo-Nyo's exclamation in the excerpt above shows how, he is perplexed by the action of the women. As well as he recognizes the fact that the gods of the land are still alive and supports the action of the women. In effect, the men become afraid of such power and authority the women wield. Shey Tanto expresses this fear of the woman's action though it causes some sense of reawakening in them as he says:

Tanto: What is to be done? Are we going to allow women take over in this land? After eight years of silence the Fibuen was heard today. (20)

Also, Forgwei cannot hide his fears on the move taken by the women in order to move their men to fight together with them. When he says, "Women taking the oath of silence? You and I have allowed our wives too much freedom". (29) This gives the impression that the woman was in chains and had just given freedom by the master who feels that it is time to take back that freedom since the servant is abusing it. Meanwhile, all the women want is justice to be meted on Dewa and for their crops to be protected as seen in the excerpts. This expounds women's concern for ecology unlike men who pay little or no attention. This is because the crops are the very basis of life in such communities and destroying the crops means destroying life of which the women are custodians.

The new role of the woman in the African society as the liberator and saviour of the society is also evident in *And Palm Wine Will Flow*. The male sacred society, is stripped of its judicial powers, unmasked, and sent into exile. They only regain their posture only after the female

leader Kwengong calls a general assembly and declares a revolution against the Fon. She declares,

He cannot be Fon. The women have decided. No more Fons in the land.[...]Only the people will decide [who] the Fon will be and for how long. And the affairs of the land shall be decided by all the people in the market” (111).

She, in effect, declares the overthrow of the dictatorship and the institution of a genuine democracy. This expounds the potentials of the woman in the political field. Worth noting is the fact that she takes major political decisions which are not only beneficial to her but for the society at large. This sharply contrasts with the individualistic nature of the men.

Again in *The Survivors*, it is Mboysi who overpowers the police officer, and before shooting him, she declares mockingly:

If I die after killing you, I will be satisfied that I had my revenge. Now, this is the moment of truth. Man! Man! Come and see what a woman can do. All of you, come along and celebrate the victory of woman over Officer. Come along and celebrate your liberation. (84)

Mboysi’s speech, “Man! Man! Come and see what a woman can do,” is in an attempt to say that the woman has stepped out of that stereotypical position created by the man for her so as to submerge her. Equally, as the fact that men should give them an opportunity to do some of the things they are considered unable to do.

Butake further shows the potency of the woman and their ability to resolve conflict created by men folk in their societies. To illustrate this, John N Nkengasong in “Butake and Aristophanes: Libidinal Strategies and the Politics of the Traditional Women quotes Shadrach Ambanasom’s comment on the role of the traditional African woman which is pertinent in *And Palm-wine Will Flow*. In his opinion,

The liberation of the people from the pleasure- loving Fon, has thus been achieved thanks largely to the forceful intervention of the unique group of elderly women whose nudity is their sole protection

because no adult male can stand the sight of exposure of their
nakedness without the loss of manhood. (70)

Ambanasom's statement stresses two things; the potency of sisterhood against male oppression and the power of the naked body of women. In effect, the women in order to fight patriarchy should come together to do so. Their naked bodies which no adult male can stand the sight of exposure also hints on the power of nature as the women appear in their 'natural state'.

In addition, Ambanasom states in Chapter Three on Bole Butake's works titled "Empowerment of Women and the Masses" that "in the North West province of Cameroon this unique group of elderly women is known as the 'Takumbengs' who usually intervene in moments of heightened crisis or conflict near catastrophe." He adds that at the elementary face the women attack the authors of doom in stark nudity. This is usually known as a sign of badluck and no adult male in his right senses will hesitate to stay as they approach. At the most complicated level, they may extract a potion from their private parts and smear on their victims or force them to drink as in the case of *And Palmwine Will Flow*. This can be seen in the confrontation between the Fon and Kwengong.

Fon: (looks curiously into the pot and then turns away suddenly, holding his nose.) Urine! Urine? What is the meaning of this abomination?

Kwengong: Not urine, Chila Kintasi,
But the savory juice from
The vagina's of those upon whom
You wield power, Fon
Drink ! Oh Fon!
Drink the liquor from the vaginas
And feel the power of power !

Fon : I will die first
(the fon begins to reel until he collapses) (110)

This quotation still throws more light on the fact that the african woman draws her strength from nature in order to suppress patriarchy. This is echoed in this excerpt when the women give the Fon their urine which they call the savoury juice, to drink. The fact that after drinking this urine the Fon dies shows the power of nature over man through its ability to take away human life.

The traditional African woman whom Butake delineates in his plays had been considered hitherto as one who is unproductive with hardly any political insight or prowess. However, he debunks this ideology with the sisterhood of the ‘Takumbengs’ who show their military prowess. He illuminates this view point in *Shoes and Four Men in Arms*. Here, the group of elderly women probably the ‘Takumbeng’ silently make armed military men to take to their heels, despite the fact that they were armed to the tooth as portrayed in the excerpt from the text.

Third: Kil’u women. Very old and very dangerous women.

Second: They carry arms?

Fourth: Yes bamboos, long bamboos

Second: What do they do with bamboos?

Third: Nothing. They just walk with the bamboos. Like walking sticks you know.

Second: Why were the soldiers running?

Third: Captain, you know what it means for an old woman to expose her nakedness before your eyes?

Fourth: A curse beyond measure.

Third: The end of your manhood what is the use being a soldier without your manhood? (138-139)

This excerpt only goes to amplify what the ‘Takumbeng’ was capable of at an elementary phase, as mentioned in Shadrach Ambanasom’s essay. He also notes that at the moment of writing this essay, “Cameroon Calling” (a national radio news magazine anchored by Ephraim Banda Ghoghomo) reported of a current serious conflict in Aghem, Wum of the North West region of Cameroon, between cattle grazers and the women whose crops have been destroyed. It was reported that a group of naked elderly women had taken the Fon of Aghem hostage for more than three months. They were requesting the Fon to send away the grazers from their farms and to pay them compensation for the destruction. This problem between cattle grazers and women is

therefore an issue in his society that Butake seeks to explore as seen in *Lake God* between the Fon, his cohort Dewa and the women.

In *The Survivors*, *And Palm Wine Will Flow*, and *Lake God*, Butake portrays a society in which the “less noble sex,” phoenix-like, wakes up to the reality of the helplessness of the so-called “more noble sex” to assert their hitherto dormant political power and to effect change. In *The Survivors*, this is no easy task as the heroine must first succumb to the stereotypical role of woman as a sex object in order to put herself in a vantage position to defeat the much dreaded and all-powerful, but corrupt police officer. The ultimate liberalization of the survivors is attained when Mboysi uses her feminine wiles to trick the officer who has exploited her sexually into giving her the gun with which she shoots him with.

Similarly, in *And Palm Wine Will Flow*, the women take the action to a broader and much more political arena as they team up in defiance of their husbands, to oust the tyrannical and corrupt Fon from his palace in favour of a more democratic form of government whose head will henceforth, be decided by the people. Consequently, when the Fon dies, the women declare the rule of democracy in the land as the only means towards attaining a more meaningful mode of life that had long been deprived by a tyrannical regime. In Butake’s plays thus, the concern for the women in implementing meaningful politics that would provide a more harmonious experience for humanity is expedient.

Butake also presents strong and brave women who stake their sacred selves for the well being of the community. In effect, he deconstructs the idea of the woman being weak and cowardly. John Nkemngong shares this view in his essay “Butake and Aristophanes: Libidinal Strategies and the Politics of the Traditional Woman”. He states that

The traditional woman is capable of rising above her supposed degenerate self imposed by patriarchy. The experience of the women in Butake’s plays proves that in a situation of emergency or in a predicament that threatens the very basis of humanity’s existence, they can stake their sacred self as a last resort to save that humanity that came to existence by the same token. In doing this, they are even more patriotic and more humanitarian. (9-10)

It is worth noting that this sense of commitment as portrayed by women like Mboysi, in *The Survivors*, is for the betterment of all. It is neither for self-aggrandisement nor material endowment as seen in the works of some chauvinistic writers but for the salvation of mankind including the men who oppressed them.

According to Janice Birkeland in “Ecofeminism: Linking Theory and Practice”, masculinity is measured by power as well as a distance from the ‘feminine’. Because masculinity is linked with powerfulness and autonomy, dependency and powerlessness are seen as marks of femininity hence unequal treatment. In reading Butake’s plays one finds it difficult to draw the line on who the ‘men’ are and who the ‘women’ are. This is because the women seem to embody those qualities that defined men while the men are rather passive and dormant in the activities of the community which was the supposed role of the woman. In fact, the women in a chorus challenge their husbands into action by revealing to them how “manless” they have become:

Chorus: Shey! Our husband!

Father of our children!

Shey, our husband! Are you sitting there quietly

When our farms have been seized from us?

What shall we eat? What shall our children eat?

What shall you eat, Shey? We know you are in there.

Speak up, Shey. Or shall we come into the sacred presence in

Our present condition? Speak up, Shey! (95-96)

This challenge from the women to the men falls on deaf ears, as the men refuse to come out of hiding to stand up against the Fon who has seized their wives’ farm lands and given them to “manless men like Kibanya [who] have their caps topped by red feather by the Fon himself” (96). In fact, Kwengong, the leader of the women, and all the other women are impatient with their husbands’ lack of courage and heroism in the presence of this crisis. So Kwengong asks Shey, “how long shall we wait to see this judgment come? What shall we, your wives, do?” (97). The men’s sacred society, traditionally empowered to resolve conflicts between the Fon and his subjects, has been emasculated. Even the Kibaranko has fallen; it would do nothing to restore the lands seized by

the Fon. The Tapper who rushes in to report on what has been happening in the village to Shey says:

Tapper: “The Fon has seized the palm-bush. His watch-dogs are there now. They beat me severely. My clothes are tatters” and that, “only women are singing, the whole land is full of women, not a single man is left” (107).

This statement from the Tapper virtually affirms the hypothesis, pointing to the swap that has taken place: the women have now become “men,” and the men who have taken to silence, hiding or uttering verbal threats have become “women.” Hence, Kwengong declares war against the all-powerful Fon with the war song “*The sun of the land has set! The elephant has fallen! The lion of Ewawa is no more!*” She promises that the Fon will not escape “*the wrath of the women*” (108). She tells Shey Ngong that the women have “*decided to take very drastic action against the desecration of the gods and the ancestors*” (109). She invokes and assumes the posture of the “*Earth-goddess [who] needs no one’s leave—to walk where her feet will. . .*” (109). She challenges the Fon who still holds to the patriarchal belief that women are powerless. The confrontation between the Fon and Kwengong, which leads to his imminent death, only goes a long way to show two very crucial and irrefutable new pictures of women: that they have awakened to their own strength by overcoming the traditional notion of powerlessness that was formerly ascribed to them, and that they have realized and used the idea that the liberation of their land resides in their own hands.

The women’s remarkable achievement in *And Palm Wine Will Flow* is equally matched by Mboysi’s in *The Survivors*. In an attempt to find sustenance after a tragic natural disaster the four survivors Mboysi, Ngujol, Old one, Tata and Bolame find themselves near Officer’s camp. At their first encounter with the officer, Ngujoh, the mature male retreats, freezes and then collapses. The Old One, who by virtue of his gender and age is supposed to protect the survivors, challenges the officer in martial, patriarchal terms:

Old one: Who are you, hiding your face in the bush like the coward you are, uttering menaces and pointing things (gun) at people? If you’re a man, show your face and talk to me. Man to man! (62)

Old One’s challenge here again is borne out of the stereotypical concept that only men can and ought to be engaged in martial activities, and that the survival of the family lies solely in the

hands of the males. However, when Ngujoh intimates that Mboysi should negotiate with Officer on the basis of her education and charms we begin to see a shift in power. In fact, Old One and Ngujoh assert, though ironically, that the woman has unfathomable powers at her disposal to use in times of crisis. Mboysi's literacy and "great charms" become stronger weapons than guns in the fight for survival. But before she sells herself to Officer for food, water and clothes, she asks the men a very critical question about Officer: "*How do I ask him? If you, men, have failed to convince another man, can a poor woman do?*" Old One regrets that things have changed and that the old values have given way to the new, now to be controlled by women. This comes out clearly in his dialogue with Ngujoh:

Old One: I see. In our times problems were resolved by men. Men discussed and, as you put it, negotiated with other men. Man to man. But today, I am learning something new I now know that Officer prefers to discuss and negotiate with. . .

Ngujoh: Never mind your times, Old One. Those days were ancient days. Today, women are the key to power. Even the door with seven locks on it can be unlocked by a woman. In your days you used reason. And only when reason failed did you fall back on combat.

Old One: Those were the days, indeed. Man to man. Word against word. Fist for fist. Those were the days!
(65)

Indeed, today is the day of the woman! As Ngujoh suggests prophetically, "*With her by his side [Officer] will even forget his gun. The charms of that woman will unnerve any man*" (65). Later and as Mboysi succeeds in bringing food and water and therefore life back to the survivors, Ngujoh, who is disgusted with the airs Mboysi is putting up, questions such effrontery: "*When did women start talking like that in the presence of men*" to which Old One replies, "*You sent her to Officer, didn't you?*" Ngujoh therefore has to contend himself with the fact that, "*this woman has power over us*" and the Old One reminds him that "*this woman has power over Officer. With her help Officer will allow us to go to Ewawa*" (70). Officer himself echoes Old One's conviction, telling Mboysi that the people's survival depends on her: "*They can wait. Their survival depends on you...*" This only goes to show the importance of the woman in her society.

In the same light, Mboysi shows the ‘manlessness’ of the man when she attacks Ngujoh. At the climax of the play, Mboysi comes to realise that she has reduced herself to a prostitute to save her people and it is time to regain her pride and dignity. She sees the clothes officer gives her as “the prize for her disgrace” and confronts Ngujoh for luring her into this act as seen in the excerpt:

Mboysi: It was you who sent me to him, not so? You will pay for it now.

Now ! I say, you will pay for it now! You manless man! You will pay for it!

Ngujoh: She is mad, Old one. She is. Save me from her madness!

She’s gone quite mad ! Save me, I say !save me from her madness!(p.78)

Mboysi then metamorphoses into a “man” to face her adversary, Officer: “I will show Officer that in spite of his gun and loud menaces, he is only a man, a mortal.” After all, Mboysi has just proven that men are no longer men that they are not invincible, they have become “manless,” and Officer is no exception. Old One recognizes this truth as he remarks to Ngujoh about Mboysi’s “manness:” “Between you and that woman, I do not know who the man is” (79).

Women have also broken loose of traditional status of sexual condescension and household chores of cooking for and feeding their husbands by turning their “supposed” weaknesses into strength. This is x-rayed in *Lake God* when the vacuum created by the exiled male Kwifon (39, 41) is filled by the women’s Fibuen. Fisiy, one of the notables, quickly acknowledges the importance of women in response to Forgewei’s challenge to female political activism (“Who gave such powers to women?”): “We cannot really blame the women. The Fon is the one breaking the laws and destroying the land in the name of this new religion brought by Father Leo” (30). The overthrow of the men and Fon by women in defense of their land falls in line with Jodi Jacobson’s assessment of women’s contribution to development in the Third World. It is as if women were reacting to Jacobson’s article, “*Closing the Gender Gap in Development*” in which Jacobson argues that:

[...] women perform the lion’s share of work in subsistence economies, toiling longer hours and contributing to family income than men do. Yet in a world where economic value is computed in monetary terms alone, women’s

work is not counted as economically productive when money changes hands. Women are viewed as “unproductive” by government statisticians, economists[...] and even by their husbands. A huge proportion of the world’s real productivity therefore remains undervalued, and women’s essential contributions to the welfare of families and nations remain unrecognized.

(61-26)

The above assertion justifies why Butake’s men are very reluctant to accept the fact that the women folk can rise up against them and their Fon. On the other hand, the plays reveal how far Butake was ahead of his contemporaries in depicting a new woman, one who could rise out of the ashes of the past into a position of imminence.

This chapter has shown that the women are seeking various ways to make their voices heard just as those we find in *Lake God*, *The Survivors*, and *And Palm-wine Will Flow*. It highlighted the fact that a woman’s role is equally as important in a society and should not be regarded as insignificant. It has equally brought to limelight the fact that the woman has drawn from nature the strength to fight against derogatory roles levied on her. Through her role of feeding the family, she has shown the man that she is very much needed by him in the society. This is why the next chapter, we elaborate on the importance of the woman in societal development and how her join efforts with the men will only lead to the betterment of the society

CHAPTER THREE

PROGRESS IN COMPLEMENTALITY

The major preoccupation of this chapter is to show the possibility of harmony between man, woman and nature. It strives to elucidate how Bole Butake's representation of men and women in *Lake God, The Survivors, and And Palm-wine Will Flow* allows the two groups to complement each other. Instead of presenting one group as superior or inferior to the other, this chapter finds out and brings to the limelight how the co-existence of man, woman and nature is rather beneficial. In essence, it establishes the fact that they are dependent on one another to survive. Thus, Butake attempts to eradicate any notion of chauvinism or radical feminism in a bid to create a society where men and women will focus more on societal growth than on the quest for power.

Far from being the weaklings, Butake creates strong, brave and assertive women in *Lake God, The Survivors and, And Palm-wine Will Flow*. The rationale behind this is not to say that women are stronger than men are not. This portrayal only goes to show that gender works better if each sex is conscious of their role and respects it. Thus, the best approach to use in reforming the society here is through a democratic system which enables every citizen to have a say. Her sex notwithstanding, Kwengong resolves in *And Palm-wine Will Flow*, to propose an adoption of a democratic system.

Kwengong: He is not mad, father of children. I have been thinking it over. People must have a right in deciding who rules over them and what person rules.

SheyNgong: Woman! What are you talking about?
Have you ever heard of a snake without a head?

Kwengong: Of course, the land will have a head. Only that the people will decide who that will be and for how long. And the affairs of the land shall be decided by all the people in the market place. (111)

This resolution is not to show that she has won over men. It is simply an attempt at a revolutionary equality amongst gender, which is different from the general misconception of equality that causes some women to "compete" with men. Equality here is a way of bringing

ideas together without necessarily wanting to prove that one sex is better than the other, with the common goal of making the nation a better place.

In Butake's *The Survivors*, it is not for nothing that Old One observes that "A woman will soften the hardest heart" (63). He says this to Mboysi in an attempt to push her to Officer whom she is expected to flatter in order for him to cater for their needs. To reiterate what Old One says Ngujoh affirms that "... even the door with seven locks on it can be unlocked by a woman" (65). Although these hyperbolic claims make women appear like people who can easily manipulate others to do things against their wish, it also glorifies the woman's strength and her ability to bring strategic political solutions in times of need. This natural ability can go a long way to help the society if it is merged with the physical strength of the men.

In like manner, the women's resolution to starve their husbands both with food and "hunger of the loins" (28), referring to sex, should not be castigated and regarded as bad. This is because these strategies were adopted not for their own personal interest but for the wellbeing of the community as a whole. Thus they manipulate the men with the sole aim of making them listen to the voice of reason, which was to wake up from their slumber and join them in saving the land from impending calamity. It is as a result of this move by the women that the men come together and decide to forcefully take the Fon to the sacred grove of *Lake God* where the necessary rites are to be performed. Unfortunately, it is too late when they finally take action.

In addition, despite the strength and wisdom of Butakian heroines, they still consult the male folk when need be. A close look at Kwengong in *And Palm-wine Will Flow* depicts her as an epitome of the traditional but assertive woman whom Butake admires. This is because she is quick to note the importance of her husband's instructions and constantly deliberates with him before taking any major action.

Voices: Shey! Our husband!

Father of our children! Are you sitting there quietly

When our farms have been seized from us?

What shall we eat? What shall our children eat?

What shall you eat shey? We know you are in there.

Speak up, Shey. Or shall we come into the sacred presence in our present condition? Speak up, Shey.

SheyNgong: Kwengong?

Kwengong: My ears are on the ground, husband.

SheyNgong: Kwengong, let the others go back home and wait there. You come inside. If the fonwishes to wrestle with the gods he must know how tough his belt is. Do you hear me wives?

Voices: We hear you well, father of our children. We go home to wait there. (96)

Apparently, Butake is not out to establish a situation where women will exercise absolute power over the men. That is why after the defeat of the Fon, Kwengong does not take power. Rather, the message is that both women and men need to put their heads together to come up with a solution in times of need.

The joint effort of Earth goddess and Kibaranko lays emphasis on the need for collective governance for societal salvation to be effectively achieved. It does not in any way suggest that the women, represented by Kwengong, are better or stronger than the men. That is why after the Fon's defeat Kwengong goes back to her husband to report the Fon's death so that they can unanimously decide on what step to take next. The tapper, who has completely lost all hope on the notion of fons, insists that there shall be no fon in Ewawa anymore (49). Kwengong however, points out to him that there is need for a ruler to ensure that peace and order is kept in the land. The only difference is, the people will be the ones to decide on who rules them and how they are ruled. The Tapper agrees to this view and is quick to choose SheyNgong as the next ruler of the land but Kwengong is bent on letting the people have a say in the choice of their next head.

Kwengong's determination to involve the people in the choice of the next ruler not only highlights Butake's democratic stance in government, but the importance of a woman's voice in political issues. This is because women have always been considered incapable of taking major political decisions. Our society mirrors this view as it is only nowadays that we find more women engaged in political issues. Kwengong's brilliant ideals and her active participation in political issues are not in an attempt to say women are better in politics. It is rather to say that women also have potentials that need to be exploited. This is to say that if women are given the

opportunity to bring in their ideas together with the men, they will together make a greater nation.

In addition, Bole Butake just like George Lamming in his essay “The Occasion for Speaking” seems to be saying that it is time for the women to speak. Since they have been considered voiceless and incapable of reasoning. In protest, Butake gives the woman a voice in his plays and portrays her as a symbol of reason. In *Lake God*, he expounds this view through women like Angela, Yensi and Ma Kusham. Angela, the Fon’s wife, in an attempt to make the Fon see reason, tells him that:

Angela: I beg, lef me da whiteman palava. You ought to listen to your people sometimes.

Fon: You mean like offering sacrifices to the lake god?

Angela: Yes, it will satisfy them, at least.

Fon: Sometimes I wonder at you naivety Angela. These people are not interested in the lake god. They are just jealous that we own cattle. They will do anything to become rich too.

Angela: I don’t think so, this is more serious than you think. Take this talk about the boiling lake. Have you tried to find out? (46)

Angela who epitomizes a virtuous wife is contrasted to the image of women as “daughters of eve” who are capable of nothing but pain and destruction. This is because she tries to make the Fon see the need of doing whatever is necessary to save the land. This suggests that if the Fon had listened to her, maybe their destructive end would have been evaded.

Yensi together with Ma Kusham and the rest of the “fibuen”, also speaks out against the Fon and his cohorts. It is as a result of the fact that the men only started listening to the women late that they all have an unfortunate end. Kwengong also tells the people in *And Palm-wine Will Flow* that there is a need for them to “think” before the Fon’s death and after he dies she still advises them to think. This repetition emphasizes reason. In effect, she tells them to think so that they will not make the same mistake of letting another tyrant rule them. Hence, Butake seems to be saying that if we do not come together, that is men and women; to work in harmony we will all face a disastrous end just like the people in *Lake God*.

Similarly, Kwengong in *And Palm-wine Will Flow*, proposes to her husband that the people should be empowered not only to choose a leader, but also to decide on how they want to be ruled. She adds that this and other matters plaguing the society will be discussed in the market place. The market place is used by Butake as a dramatic device to symbolize transparency. This is because there is nothing to hide in the market as it is an open air, hence no corrupt practices. The market place also stands as a symbol of accountability where the leaders will give an account of what they have been doing or are doing. This is aimed at making sure that the interests of the people are given prime importance. Equality, freedom of speech and individual liberty can also be attained through the symbolic market place. This is because no consideration is given to class, race or sex in the market place therefore the opinion of each person counts.

The market place is also a powerful motif in Butake's plays focusing on the subject of leadership. In *Lake God*, the fibuen meets in the market place to decide on its course of action against the Fon. In *And Palm-wine Will Flow*, the initiators of democracy (Kwengong, Shey Tanto and Tapper) decide that the affairs of Ewawa will be debated in a market place. In addition, Kwengong adds that the day the new leader will make a wrong decision the people shall again gather in the market place to oust him. This is exactly what happens in *Dance of the Vampires* as we see Psaul Roi taken to the market place to face the judgment of the people he has wronged. The market place therefore, emerges in Butake's plays as the symbol of the people's power, the embodiment of a spirit of communion and cooperation that should exist between rulers and their subjects. Therefore, it is a place for the communal resolution of problems.

Butake presents Kwengong as an impartial character who is void of favoritism. This is because she does not favour her husband over others. In effect, she has the interest of the people at heart just like the women in *Lake God*. Her just and upright nature is seen when after destroying the palace, the tapper brings the Fon's "bugle" and appoints Shey as the next leader of Ewawa. Kwengong's instant reply to this is:

Kwengong: He cannot be Fon. The women have decided no more fons in the land.

Tapper: So what is going to happen?

Kwengong: The people will rule through the council of elders led by Shey here. The day that he takes the wrong decision, that same day the people will meet in the market place and put another as the head of the council of elders.

Tapper: Wonderful idea! So that all the people shall see clearly that the fowl has an anus [...] no more secrets in the land. (53)

Kwengong in the conversation warns that although SheyNgong has been made head, he should not consider himself untouchable. Thus, the very instance he fails, the same people who appointed will dismiss him and put another leader. Also the Tapper's proverbial statement, "so that all the people shall see clearly that the fowl has an anus", still expounds on this idea of transparency in governance.

With the participation above of women in major decision making, it can only be hoped that since the interest of both gender groups are represented, better results will be seen and societal growth will be restored. Talking about contribution women can bring to politics and nation building, Gertrude Monella during a women's conference in Beijing (1995) opines:

We will bring the spirit of serving people which men don't have. Men are used to being served, so even when you are in power, you only want to be masters, and we are used to serving people so when we are in power we will use the position to serve everybody. (3)

The successful moves made by heroines like Kwengong and Mboysi in *And Palm-wine Will Flow* and *The Survivors* respectively affirm Mongella's claim above. For instance, Kwengong succeeds in freeing the society from a tyrannical ruler but rather than want to be served, she accepts that her husband should rule, while she assists him with words of wisdom and advice.

Mboysi in *The Survivors* also appears as the only hope left for the survivors from the exploitative officer. After she succeeds in getting food and shelter, for the other survivors, from Officer, she is still sent by the others to go and negotiate their freedom from Officer. The Old One is surprised at the reversal of values and says that "in our time problems were resolved by men. Men discussed, and as you put it, negotiated with other men. Man to man. But today I am learning something new... (65). "Something new" mentioned here by Old One is the fact that the

women can contribute to decision making. This therefore calls for a new era of governance where combined gender action will be channeled towards a common goal.

Again, Mboysi's outburst to the Officer that "I am human you know. We too all are humans like you, officer" (80) is symbolic. It is symbolic to the cry of women to be considered as important movers of a positive revolution in their respective societies. In the end, she succeeds in redeeming her society by defeating the officer as she manages to seize his gun and kill him. Mboysi's victory is however short-lived because she is killed by another soldier. However, her death can be seen as an allusion to the sacrificial lamb, Jesus, in the Bible that died to free his people from bondage. In this case Old One, Ngujoh and the children are set free from the shackles of Officer. Hence, her death does not stand as a sign of weakness but strength and bravery.

In the same light, the message Butake may be passing across through Mboysi's death is the fact that people must be ready and expect the worse when they embark on a journey of change. Thus, it is not an easy task to bring about societal change or growth. In effect, it needs the joint effort of men and women to effect this change. This could possibly be one of the reasons why Mboysi ends up a fallen heroine because she solely tries to effect change as the men are too afraid to join her in the fight for freedom. This failure in terms of disunity can also be attributed to the disaster in *Lake God*, which wipes out the entire village. The "Fibuen" had to take up action before the men start looking for ways to save the land, however it is too late when they finally wake up from slumber. To illuminate his view of progress in harmony Butake brings in *And Palm-wine Will flow* to show how both genders complement each other. The Earth goddess impersonated by Kwengong, together with the women's cult, and SheyNgong aided by the Kibaranko impersonated by the tapper put together their efforts and succeeds in bringing down the tyrannical Fon.

One aspect which Butake applauds about the African woman is her ability to feed her family. This is done through many ways but Butake focuses on the rural women who through subsistence farming are able to feed their families and provide for the needs of their children. In *Lake God* this idea is x-rayed through the rural women who carry their grievances to the Fon because the crops which serve as a source of living are being destroyed by the cattle of grazers. It

is therefore ironical that the men are not bothered by this problem but rather put up a non-charlant attitude to it. Even when the women come up with strategies to push them into action, some of the men like Lagham and Maimo get violent. Lagham in anger explains to his friends that “before I knew what I was doing I had given her a sound slap on the face” (30). And the wife in tears says “go to Nganba and make the cattle leave the land instead of beating up a defenseless woman who has been fighting all her life to feed her husband and children” (30). This quotation not only exposes female subjugation but it looks at the possibility of a better future with combined efforts. Furthermore, it is as a result of the fact that women never had the support of the men from the beginning that they were marginalized by other men like Dewa who believed women are powerless. That is why men like Forgwei are surprised at the women’s action against them and wonders “who gave such powers to the women?” (27). The call on the men to chase the grazers from their land is also significant as it is a call for unity and for the men to complement their efforts.

Worth noting is the symbolic title of the play *Lake God*. The lake which is part of nature symbolizes life and fertility. This is because it does not only serve as water to drink but as habitat for water bodies, like fishes, which also serve as food. In the play, nature is therefore seen as a god because it takes and gives life at will. The women make this clear when they say:

Chorus: [...] the fon will lead the people in a sacrifice to the lake god and consummate our
 love and kinship by sharing the royal bed with the Queen. And we shall have more children and a
 great harvest.

From the women’s response the lake symbolizes fertility not just of the soil but of the womb, hence a life giver. However, just like a god there are consequences when we go against his laws. Butake points this out through the image of the “boiling lake”. In personifying the lake, he aims at showing the destructive nature of the lake. This is seen at the end of the play when the lake wipes out the entire community but for three survivors. Accordingly, for man and woman to live in harmony with nature they need to complement each other.

Chapter Three has discussed how the dualism of the self, man, and the other, woman and nature, should be revisited. It has looked at how these aspects can complement each other and the need to stay in harmony in order to survive. Man needs the woman because she has a great role

to play in the society like providing food and contributing in decision making. The chapter has shed light on the complementary relationship between man , woman and nature by showing how the efforts of the women if merged with that of the men can produce better result and help in nation building. It also presents nature as life giver to humans. Thus, they need nature in order to survive. At this point, the work will examine the pedagogic relevance of the works understudy.

CHAPTER FOUR
**THE PEDAGOGIC RELEVANCE OF *LAKE GOD, THE SURVIVORS, and AND PALM-
WINE WILL FLOW***

Chapter Four discusses the pedagogic relevance of the plays under study. The relevance of the play shall therefore be discussed from two perspectives: the educational and the socio-cultural relevance. From the educational perspective the work seeks to find out and bring to lime light some of the advantages of teaching English using literature texts and how it can be done. This brings in the concept of interdisciplinarity. This chapter also aims at showing the several steps that have been taken by women to help in nation building one of which is in agriculture. Thus, it brings out the socio-cultural relevance of the text. It also finds out and brings to lime light how women have taken several steps in the society to free themselves from all forms of domination. The most evident has been the struggle to gain economic independence from the male folk and to help in nation building. To achieve this, several options such as agriculture and education have been explored. Consequently, the chapter expounds how knowledge of the major themes in the work can advance the teaching and learning of a literary text as well how it can lead to student's social development.

Nowadays, the debate is no longer whether literature should be taught in schools but rather on how and why we use literature in a language classroom. The importance of this subject in the curriculum cannot be overemphasized owing to the fact that it widens student's horizons as it is a subject that does not concentrate on a particular area of knowledge. Literature therefore means, meeting a lot of people, knowing other different points of view, ideas, thoughts, minds and more importantly, knowing ourselves better. In effect, it covers the whole scale of human experiences in the whole universe. Good literature, be it drama, poetry or prose is likely to infuse in us a highly developed awareness of what is good and what is bad and develop amiable qualities such as love, honesty and communalism.

Literature therefore aims at educating as well as conscientizing a reader to value the world in which they live in. Thus works of literature do not only entertain but moralize. It is however worth noting today, we come to realize that so many subjects are interrelated and interdependent on each other. That is why we find topics related to geography, history and

literature in an English language class. This concept known as interdisciplinarity creates an environment for one to learn as much as they can, while studying a language point.

To shed more light on the concept of interdisciplinarity, Clinton Golding in *Integrating the Disciplines: Successful Interdisciplinary subjects*, defines interdisciplinarity as something “knowledgeable across disciplines with the ability to examine critically, synthesize and evaluate knowledge across a broad range of disciplines” (1). When looking or solving a problem from a single discipline, various important but complex problems, phenomena, and concepts are resistant. Golding states that “a full understanding of knowledge can be constructed by applying multiple perspectives and ways of thinking” (2). Thus if learners understand what they are been taught, they can use the knowledge gained to apply to other disciplines. To x-ray the concept of interdisciplinarity the study will look at the relevance of using literature in a language classroom especially our Cameroonian context.

Golding also states that interdisciplinary learning will permit students to “develop a reflective and explicit knowledge of how disciplines work, the issues and problems they can address and the strength and limitations of each discipline as well as the possibilities of interaction between them” (*Integrating the Disciplines* 4). This brings in the connection between Literature in English and English Language as literature through English will enable students to use the language as much as possible. Thus, with the knowledge of interdisciplinary education students are likely to adapt to different situations. Presently, the study will look at the importance of the text understudy to Cameroonian learners based on this concept of interdisciplinarity.

One of the main tasks in the classroom is to pinpoint how far literary language deviates from ordinary language. Ezra Pound in *How to Read* notes that “Great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree” (part ii). One of the debates centered on literature teaching in the language classroom is whether literary language is somehow different from other forms of syntax as it breaks the more usual rules of syntax, collocation and even cohesion. For instance, “there are women here who, as soon as we disperse, will start disclosing everything as if their mouth is leaking” (24). By asking students to explore sophisticated uses of language, we are also encouraging them to think about the norms of language use. This is because in order to understand the stylistic effect of the example above, students will need to be aware of how they differ from common usage. In the example for

instance, we may ask students to think of what usually grows; even perhaps to look up common collocations for it in the dictionary. The next stage is to consider what effect is conveyed by suggesting that one's 'mouth is leaking'. In context of a play or novel, this may even help students in interpreting its underlying message or theme more easily. By focusing on the 'deviant' use of the verb here, we are helping students not only to become aware of the stylistic effects in this literary work but we are also involving them in the process of discovering more generalisable features of language like collocation. In other words, using literature with students can help them to become more sensitive to some of the overall features of English.

The use of literature in the language classroom also develops a student's interpretative abilities. Literature is particularly a good source for developing students' abilities to infer meaning and to make interpretations. This is because literary texts are usually rich in multiple level of meaning, and demand that the reader/ learner is actively involved in 'teasing out' the unstated implications and assumptions of the text. For instance, when Lagham in *Lake God* says "there is something going on in this land that will deliver an indescribable monster", one notices that this sentence has a powerful figurative meaning beyond its fixed dictionary meaning. Trying to ascertain this significance provides an excellent opportunity for students to discuss their own interpretations, based on the evidence in the texts. Thus by encouraging students to grapple with the multiple ambiguities of the literary text, we are helping to develop their overall capacity to infer meaning across both disciplines.

Within the classroom itself, literature texts encourage language acquisition. The use of literary texts is often a particular successful way of promoting activities where students need to share their feelings and opinions, such as discussions and group works. This is because literature is rich in multiple levels of meanings. Focusing on a task which demands students express their own personal responses to these multiple levels of meaning can only serve to accelerate the student's acquisition of language. Acquisition may also be accelerated because the context for processing the new language is striking. Take, for example a dramatized play reading with a group of learners. While reading an extract from the play on their own, they may find themselves unfamiliar with some of the vocabulary in the extract. But by listening to the extract read aloud by the teacher or better still acted out on a cassette, they may be able to hazard a useful guess as

to the meaning of the new word; a guess facilitated by their understanding of the relationship between the speakers and the intonation they use to express this.

Also in reading the plays understudy, students will get use to creative ways of expressions and, in turn they will use these expressions in their everyday conversations, thus enriching their vocabulary. This enables students to use expressions in literature in their language classrooms, thus incorporating different disciplines in this case students' creativity is not limited to a single discipline as they can positively transfer across other disciplines.

Literature is also important in teaching of English language as it educates the whole person. The linguistic benefits of using literature with the language learner have been mentioned. But literature may also have a wider educational function in the classroom in that it can help to stimulate the imagination of students, to develop their critical abilities and to increase their emotional awareness. By asking students to respond personally to the text they are given, they will become increasingly confident about expressing their own ideas and emotions in English. They will feel empowered by their ability to struggle with the text and its language, and to relate it to the values and traditions of their own society.

Incorporating two disciplines will lead to students' personal involvement. Literature can be very useful in the language learning process owing to the personal involvement it enhances in the reader. Once a student reads a text he/she becomes involved in the text. Understanding the meanings of lexical items or phrases becomes less significant than pursuing the development of a story. The student becomes eager to find out what happens as the play unfolds to the climax; he feels close to certain characters and shares their emotional responses. This can have beneficial effects on the whole language learning process. For this reason, the selection of a literary text should be in relation to the needs, expectations, age, interest as well as level of learners.

More importantly is the student's cultural background and their social and political expectations which will help or hinder their understanding of the text. It will be difficult for example, for most students in Cameroon to make sense of Jane Austen's novels without having knowledge on the class systems and the values of the British society these systems describe. Thus, the teacher will need to consider how much background he/she will have to provide students to have at least a basic understanding of the text. Given that the texts understudy is from

a Cameroonian author, most students are familiar with some of the cultural issues raised in the plays. For example, patriarchy which is an extant phenomenon in our society.

In addition, the fact that the plays treat societal issues that the students can identify with makes it relevant to learners. For example, issues of land use and management. This is a common problem faced in our society Cameroon and the playwright, Bole Butake, coming from the grasslands in Cameroon where this is a major problem, uses his play to expound this problem. This is in a bit to create awareness and look for possible solutions to this problem. The problem being that of land use and management is highlighted in *Lake God*, through the farmer-grazer problem. Grazers like Dewa do not control their cattle and, as a result, the cattle stray into the farms of the women, hence destroying their crops. This problem faced in the text is still ongoing in most parts of the grass fields where rural women suffer this same plight. The rebellion of the 'fibuen' against the cattle grazers is a call for a fight against these societal ills.

In *Lake God*, *The Survivors*, and *And Palm-wine Will Flow*, Butake presents a hierarchical society where the man is at the top of the scale and the woman at the bottom. He presents a typical grassland post colonial society where the woman has been marginalized and pushed to the peripheries. The grassland society here stands as a symbol of male domination which is found all over the world. Male domination is evident in every environment and it only differs in the mode of representation from one region to another or one country to the other. These restrictions make it impossible for women to express themselves as well as make decisions concerning their own lives. In this texts for instance, in *And Palm-wine Will Flow*, the women start rebelling against some of the restrictions levied against them using the very roles ascribed to them to create a space for themselves. For example, the role of the woman which is to feed the family as considered by the society has enabled her to use this in empowering herself. The rural women in this case through their subsistence farming become the breadwinner of the family. This action of the rural women should serve as an example to students.

Gender in literature has gone beyond sex difference; it has become a social construct in which different roles are attributed to different sexes (male and female). The study of gender roles will help to eliminate the gap that exists between male and female students or boys and girls. As a result, it will bring about mutual respect for each other's rights. Women and men should therefore strive for equal opportunities in all aspects that concern them so that the act of

ascribing roles will be curbed. Each person should be given the chance to excel in whatever they are doing so that together we can all evolve. From this knowledge of gender, students will be able to treat each other fairly without any bias. That is, if a boy can do something, he should be given the opportunity to do so and this goes the same for the girl. Consequently, a girl should not be refused an opportunity just on the basis of the fact that she is a girl.

Education is also an indispensable aspect of human existence. It has to do with the adult and more experienced passing down knowledge to the younger generation. This can either be in a formal context, that is, teacher-learner relation or an informal context, parent-child relationship. Here focus is on the formal aspect of learning where in a teacher undergoes training so as to be able to impart knowledge on the students. Education has the power of transforming lives as it broadens one's horizon and connects an individual to the world at large. Thus just like the boy child, a girl child has the power of transforming and even saving lives. For example, in *The Survivors*, when Mboysi together with the other survivors comes to the settlement where the Officer lives, Ngujoh and the Old One pleads with Mboysi, to go and meet the officer given that she is a teacher and is educated so she will be able to speak to the Officer.

In the same light, the role played by the rural women to the development of the society is relevant in our society today. Although it is difficult to give an accurate assessment of women's contributions to agriculture, due to the lack of statistics, it is estimated that rural women supply about 90% of the food needed for the subsistence of the population. The rural women just like Yensi, Kimbong, Nkasai, Nkfusia and Kimaa do not only practice farming in order to feed their family but the society at large. These efforts made by women to sustain the society and their family are communal hence communalism should be encouraged amongst students. Thus, the struggle for a better society should be a communal effort as opposed to the individualism of a minority like the Fons both in *Lake God* and, *And Palm-wine Will Flow*. This because the Fons take decisions which are beneficial only to them like the Fon in *Lake God* who refuses to chase the cattle out of the village despite the fact that they were destroying the crops of the women. This is because some of the cattle belong to him and if he sends Dewa away he stands to lose his major source of income. Hence, students should be able to make decisions that are beneficial to all than being self-centered.

Furthermore, students need to have knowledge on the relationship between man/nature and the environment. This will help them revisit the way they treat their natural environment as well as understand that both nature and man can be complementary. Thus, man has to treat his environment with so much care and attention so as to be able to leave together in harmony. As much as we know that man has a dual identity of being good and bad nature is ambivalent as well. For example, the lake can be good and bad at the same time since it provides water and is also a symbol of fertility, by extension it gives life. The destructive side of the lake which ravages the fictional country of Ewawa also symbolizes the deadly nature of the lake. In essence nature gives and takes life at will just like the human nature which is good or bad depending on the situation in which we find ourselves. Knowledge of this will shape students behavior when interacting with others so that, when they come into contact with someone with a complex attitude they will be able to accept them in the society and live with them. The destructive nature of nature will also help them maintain a positive attitude towards their environment to prevent any deadly catastrophe.

Similarly, Lake God expounds the importance of agriculture to the people. This text is therefore important as students will get to see the role agriculture plays in our environment. As mentioned in the play, the rural women are able to feed their husbands through farming as well as cater for the needs of their children. The playwright also makes it clear that man can barely live without food which only comes through farming. This view is expatiated in the play when the women decide to starve their men to move them to action. This quickly moves the men to action as some of them like Lagham confess that they can barely go another day without eating 'foo-foo'. The importance of agriculture is seen even in our society today as the rural women from the grasslands are the ones who supply 90% of the food we consume today. They even go as far as feeding our neighboring countries like Gabon, Chad, Central Africa and the world at large. In highlighting this importance, students are encouraged to go to the agricultural sector just like the head of state advised so that they can contribute to the development of Cameroon.

Despite the role agriculture plays in feeding the population, it also serves as a means of employment. In effect, through these texts, students will be able to learn that they can contribute in nation building as well as taking care of their needs through agriculture. Hence, it is not only white collar jobs in companies that can take care of our needs. Agriculture thus serves as a form

of self employment which will help in reducing unemployment in our society. In addition, we should be able to use agriculture in empowering ourselves rather than always depending on the government as it is the case with most of our youths today.

These texts will also be of great importance to secondary school learners because they will come to know that humans are part and parcel of nature therefore they cannot detach themselves from it. This is to say man cannot survive without the free gifts of nature like, water, land and air. It is as a result of this that our traditional religion is based in nature. In *Lake God*, the lake is considered a god. It is thus believed that it should be treated with utmost respect by performing the yearly sacrifices as demanded by the customs and traditions of the land. Failure to perform these sacrifices results to death. These traditional beliefs are also evident in Cameroon, especially the grassland cultures where one can find sacred groves which are said to be the house of the spirits or ancestors that guard the land. These sacred groves have their rules which humans are advised not to disobey as disobedience always have its penalty.

This chapter has talked of the significance of Bole Butake's *Lake God, The Survivors and, And Palm-wine Will Flow* as suitable literary texts for the teaching of lesson. It has also explored the importance of interdisciplinarity and in this case using literature to teach English language. Furthermore, it has highlighted the socio-cultural importance of the text and how it will go a long way to impact the lives of students.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

This work set out to investigate how women and nature as presented in Bole Butake's *Lake God and Other Plays* suffer oppression in a male dominated society. This double oppression is as a result of the fact that nature has been feminized through names like "mother earth" and in a culture that sees the woman as inferior equally sees whatever is associated to it as subordinate. Thus, the deprived group has been relegated to the position of the "other" by various forms of patriarchal domination and subjugation. This problem has therefore led to the hypothesis that although women and nature have been dominated, this domination cannot be completely achieved because women/nature has a vital role in societal development. In this respect, women have sought ways to prove that just like men; they can excel in all walks of life if given the chance to do so. For instance, through agriculture, rural women in the likes of Ma Kusham, Yensi, and Kimbong in *Lake God* have been able to feed their society and the world at large.

The work comprises an introduction to the study, four chapters and a general conclusion. At the level of the introduction, we examined the research questions, hypothesis, aims, significance, scope, definition of terms, theoretical backing, review of related literature and the structure of the work. With regards to Bole Butake's works critics such as John N Nkengasong, George Nyamndi, Eunice Ngonkum, Egodi Uchendu, Peter Abety, Tala Kashim have revealed Butake's quest for emancipation of the traditional woman. These critics have also shown that his works mirror the socio-cultural, economic and political issues that are present in his Cameroonian society.

Womanism and Ecofeminism have been used to analyze the works under study. Womanism has enabled this work to look at the oppression of the African woman which is different from that of her Western counterpart. Thus they cannot discuss oppression in the same light as the African does not only suffer patriarchy but other issues like racism too puts her at the periphery. Furthermore unlike her western counterparts, radical feminist, African feminist such as Flora Nwapa and Wangira Muthoni seek for an accommodationist method were they look at the coexistence of man and woman for societal development. Ecofeminism on the other hand, has examined the dual oppression of women and nature in a patriarchal society. These theoretical

frameworks have made it possible for the relationship between Butake's men, women and the natural environment to be examined.

Chapter One entitled, "The Place of the Woman: From a Historical perspective", has discussed how men consider themselves as superior to women and how this superiority pushes them to marginalise both the woman and the natural environment. It therefore explores the place of the woman in a traditional African society as the child bearer, domestic servant and cook. Furthermore, these women were also misrepresented in the society through works of male African writers who presented them as prostitutes or deceitful creatures. Considering the fact that women and nature are voiceless and void of reasoning, men took it upon them to reason and act on them for their personal benefits.

Chapter Two that is entitled, "The Supremacy of the Woman" probed into the evolution of the African woman in her society. It looks at how, despite the derogatory roles given to women, they have reversed some of the negative connotations and made it an asset. For instance, the place of the woman was limited to the kitchen and childbearing, functions that were considered minor. However the women in *Lake God* makes this an asset by refusing to perform these roles- starving the men both physically and emotionally- and the result is that the men can barely stand do without their women. Thus, this highlights the importance of women. This chapter has also examined how the woman, drawing her strength from nature asserts herself in a patriarchal society. This is seen through the "anlu", and "takoumbengs" who use the power of their naked bodies to create order in a society as stipulated in *And Palm-wine Will Flow*. All these and other moves have therefore been taken by the woman in order to create a new identity for themselves different from historical view of them.

Chapter Three captioned, "Progress in Complementarity", has highlighted the possibility for harmony between humans and the natural environment in Bole Butake's works. Both components of creation are portrayed as complimentary. This chapter therefore highlights the importance the woman and nature in the society as their contributions fill a void in the society. Through the efforts of the rural women in agriculture they are able to feed their families and cater for their needs. However, in eliminating the gap that exists between men and women in access to agriculture, resources will raise yields on women's farms by 20-30% and will in turn reduce the number of undernourished people in the society. In addition the chapter has revealed that everything in nature has intrinsic value. Thus, a reverence for nature and all life is an

essential element of the social transformation required in every society. This ecofeminist view is echoed in the text as we get to see nature as life because of the role it plays, water, food and pleasure, as well as we get to see its destructive side when it is not respected as illustrated in *Lake God*.

The last chapter has shed light on the pedagogic relevance of *Lake God*, *The Survivors and*, *And Palm-wine Will Flow*. It has explained the concept of interdisciplinarity and studied the importance of integrating two or more disciplines in the teaching and learning process. In this case, it has looked at how Literature can be used to teach English Language and more specifically, at the importance of the plays understudy in a literature class in any Cameroonian school because of the contemporary issues. It has also looked at some pertinent issues raised in the plays like the empowerment of the rural women in our Cameroonian society, who play a vital role in societal development as they are able to feed their communities as a whole and the world at large. Hence, the gender gap should be bridged in agriculture for the progress of the community. The work also examines the merits of education, especially of the girl child. This is echoed in *The Survivors* when the heroine Mboysi is asked by Ngujoh to go and discuss their liberation with the officer not just because she is a woman but because she was a teacher in their primary school before the disaster. This therefore means through formal education, they are groomed to stand up to the obstacles and also come up with different ways of tackling problems. We therefore trace the growth of the girl child from her position of baby sitter, to maiden, to house wife and later to a political being who holds a post of responsibility. The study also highlighted the importance of preserving the earth or taking care of our natural environment. This is because through activities like pollution and cutting down of trees, man, humans are exposed to diseases and death.

This work therefore validated the hypothetical contention that although nature and women have been dominated, this domination cannot fully be achieved because women and nature have a vital role in societal evolution as illustrated by the textual analyses and the achievements of Cameroonian women in recent years. They have also sought ways to prove that they can excel in all walks of life if they are given the chance to do so.

This work is significant as it creates awareness on the fact that there should be a balanced relationship between men/women and nature. This is because everything plays a vital role in the ecosystem and the destruction of one will definitely create a vacuum.

It is in this light that the African woman as presented in the plays under study has a great role to play in their family and in their community; socially, politically and economically. In effect, their significance does not end at the social level of being the mother who bears children and wife who cater for the needs of her entire family. It also entails that they participate in some of the major decision taking of their communities like the “Fibuen” in *Lake God* and Kwengong in *And Palm-wine Will Flow*, who becomes a liberator and a democratic activist in her community. In addition, through the rural women these women, prove that one must not be educated to contribute in nation building as they are able to take care of their families through their subsistence farming as portrayed by the women in *Lake God* hence contributing economically to the growth of their societies.

This work is equally significant as it finds out and brings to limelight the fact that nature is life-giving. This is evident in *Lake God* where the lake serves as water for drinking and for cultivation hence water is life. However, nature should also be respected and considered sacred because it has the power to take away human life. This is seen at the end of *Lake God* when the lake ravages the whole village. This incident brings to mind the lake Nyos disaster in the North West region of Cameroon which Butake fictionalizes. The National Geographic channel also expounds this idea when they highlight on the issue of pollution. They reported that approximately 1.2 billion people lack safe drinking water and in developing countries diarrhea and associated diseases kill four million children under the age of five every year. Thus, the work brings out the ills of ecofeminist destruction and raises man’s awareness to such destruction.

The work is an eye opener to the fact that there is progress in unity. In effect, the importance of both women and nature are not brought out to show how less important the man is in the society. It rather shows that combine efforts of all can lead to a better society. For example, the combine efforts of male and female in agriculture as well as leadership.

This research endeavour is significant in that it focuses on the socio-cultural development of African women, which is quite different from that of their Western counterparts. It is also important in that it adds to the ongoing debate about African Feminism -Womanism- which seeks to distinguish itself from Western Feminism in terms of representation, voice and agency. The work also advocates a complementary relationship between men and women involving mutual respect for each other’s rights. The work further identifies the differences that exist

between Western women and African women in the domain of Feminist scholarship, focusing on African Womanism as propounded by Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi and Wangira Muthoni. It also borrows from the ideas of African critics such as Flora Nwapa and Buchi Emecheta. By so doing, the work seeks to show that the African female experience differs from that of their Western counterparts as highlighted by Flora Nwapa who says that the African women face the problem as to whether they should refer to themselves, or let themselves be referred to as Feminists. In the same light, Buchi Emecheta advocates inclusion of the male folk and not exclusion as the Radical Feminists.

We will therefore say that this work contributes to existing Literature as it fills in a gap where a few has worked on. However, other possible research areas on these works can be on The African woman as an embodiment of the cultures and traditions of her society: A Study of *Lake God and And Palm-wine Will Flow*.

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