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# Confronting feminism in alobwed'epie's " the lady with a beard "

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# UNIVERSITY OF BURUNDI

**INSTITUTE FOR APPLIED PEDAGOGY**

**ENGLISH AND KIRUNDI DEPARTMENT**




# CONFRONTING FEMINISM IN ALOBWED'EPIE'S *THE LADY WITH A BEARD*


By

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**Bujumbura, July 2015**

# DEDICATION

To:

My parents,

The family of Pontien Bigiruwuhiriwe,

My beloved Mary Nibizi,

My brothers and sisters,

I warmly dedicate these pages.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this work calls for the expression of gratitude to many people who contributed to it, but whose names I cannot all mention here.

First and foremost, I owe much gratitude to the supervisor of this work, Mr. Nganyu Dominic Nformi, for the constructive guidance he provided me along this work. His suggestions, corrections and constructive remarks brought this work to its present shape.

My special thanks are also due to all of the teachers who endowed me with intellectual capacities from primary school up to university, especially those who lecture in the Institute for Applied Pedagogy, in the English and Kirundi Department; without forgetting Mr. CIZA J. Pierre, my former primary school teacher who inculcated in me the love for school since my early boyhood.

I also wish to thank the government of Burundi for sponsoring my education from primary school to the university.

Last but not least, my expression of gratitude is addressed to Mr. Shabani Félix and all of you whose names are not mentioned here.

Onesphore Nsabiyumva

## ABSTRACT

This work examines the theme of confronting feminism in Alobwed' Epie's *The Lady with a Beard.* It shows how patriarchy has set up tools like tradition, taboos, stereotypes, and religious beliefs to silence the woman. Our study examines the author's portrayal of a charismatic feminine figure, Emade; a male woman who, in the situation of widowhood challenges and debunks patriarchal chauvinism by violating tradition, taboos and stereotypes. She performs a series of actions that fall into the prerogatives of men; actions that impress both men and women. This woman suffers and endures isolation and ostracism from both men and women. Despite her great achievements unravelling patriarchal chauvinism, she at the end is reduced to a superstitious woman and seeks refuge in Christianity. Written against the background of feminism, this study operates on the hypothesis that Alobwed' Epie in *The Lady with a Beard* presents a radical woman who, in an attempt to exercise her rights, is confronted by forces of tradition.

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# GENERAL INTRODUCTION

## I.1. Background to the study

Since long ago, the African woman has been considered as a second-class citizen mostly in male dominated societies. She is seen as a man's chattel and the latter controls her in all spheres of life. There is a lot of social and cultural constraints that are imposed on her. Since she is born, she receives a kind of education that differs from the one given to her brothers. She is taught to respect boys and trained in household chores. From that moment, boys are assigned roles that allow them to develop their manhood, and girls, those which reinforce their womanhood. She does not move out and her brothers are sent to school whereas she is refused to.

Any member of the family, father, mother or brother has right upon her. She is forbidden to go home late and she is expected not to play with boys. In case she is insulted by males, she is taught not to retort or answer back. When she grows up, anyone, father, mother or brother can sell her through marriage without her consent or at least without being consulted. She is seen as a source of income, and in most cases she is given to the highest bidder; the one who pays a lot in terms of money or cattle.

This situation then generates a certain psychology on both husband and wife. The former will take his wife as an acquired resource that he got by means of his money and thus, a kind of person who has no say, no privilege, no right, no assertiveness in family but a mere slave. The latter will consider herself inferior and possessed. Then, the family sphere becomes her place of slavery and exploitation. She is exposed to her husband's brutality and a series of

predicaments befalls her. Her main task becomes that of satisfying her husband's envy, childbearing and childrearing.

Barrenness is only attributed to the woman because tradition considers a man as always fertile. When this situation occurs, she is kicked out of the family. On the contrary, if she is lucky to give birth, she must bear sons to perpetuate the lineage. Then, a woman who does not bear sons is scolded because a girl is not a child like others. She has no value, no significance in the continuation of the family. The children she bears belong to her husband's family and not to her own family.

In her relation with her husband, a woman must be humble and satisfy her husband in all matters whether sexual or others. She is supposed to be coward, weak, irrational, gossip and other qualifications emphasizing negativism. She does not share secrets with her husband since she is liable to disclosing it through her gossiping manners. Her husband commands and she has to assume a position of acquiescence. In case she resists, her fate dictates to be strangely beaten. When talking with her husband, she is not allowed to look him in the eyes because this would be interpreted as contempt. Her husband can have as many wives as he wants but a woman who practises extramarital sexual relations is seriously blamed. In this regard, most wives are shocked by the fact that their husbands wrong them but never ask them pardon.

The relation of inferiority that links a woman to her husband is not only limited to the family sphere. A woman is not allowed to go out for leisure or drink unless she is with her husband. And when in a crowd of people, men included, she is not allowed to speak. If she does so, her husband is blamed and accused of being emasculated since a woman is supposed to be regularly beaten in order to validate man's power upon her.

There are also communal tasks such as leading rituals whether social or religious of which she is not allowed to assume leadership. Moreover, it is also known that a female does not inherit. All these restrictions have vexed and tortured the African woman. Then, she is now progressively getting conscious of this male exploitation. She begins resisting and challenging male's chauvinism.

Given that men are in most cases physically stronger than women, they tend to use their physical strength and the like in order to silence and control the woman. As a consequence resulting from this, there is an upsurge in divorces, crimes involving killings and other terrible scenarios since the male world wants to continue exploiting the woman whereas the latter is tired and no longer wants to bear these hardships.

Some African writers have given their views about the hard treatment and unassertiveness of women. Alobwed'Epie is among African writers who are determined to liberate and redefine the role of the woman in a male dominated society. In *The Lady with a Beard* he presents an extraordinary woman who challenges male chauvinism and proves herself a male woman and turns down the exaggerated and false claims of patriarchy. However, she suffers isolation and ostracism from both men and women.

**I.2. Statement of the problem**

The Bakossi community like many other African societies is patriarchal and reserves very little space for the woman. As stated earlier, the woman in this society is tired of her restrictions and exploitation by patriarchy. She wants then to break through barriers but patriarchy is not ready to set her free. Given that in most cases men are physically stronger and more aggressive than females,

though a woman tries to get out of patriarchal settings, she is always caught in its web. Then, she is physically, morally and psychologically downcast. The fact that Alobwed'Epie has chosen an assertive character in a situation of widowhood is significant here. That is, a hen does not crow in the presence of a rooster.

## I.3. Aims of the study

This work examines the theme of confronting feminism in Alobwed' Epie's *The Lady with a Beard* by showing how patriarchy has set up tools like tradition, taboos, stereotypes, and religious beliefs to silence the woman. Our study also examines the author's portrayal of a charismatic feminine figure in the situation of widowhood who challenges and debunks patriarchal chauvinism, an action that provokes her isolation and ostracism from both men and women.

## I.4. Motivation of the study

The issue of confronting feminism is nowadays a very serious concern. Though Alobwed'Epie in *The Lady with a Beard* presents us the woman's assertiveness being confronted in public, this also tends to be the image of many families in permanent conflicts resulting from gender imbalance and search for assertiveness. In fact, the woman in Burundi today is believed to have gained consciousness as she now claims for assertiveness in all spheres of her life. However, in this quest for freedom, the road to liberation is slippery. The man who has long exploited her does not want to set her free and quarrels set forth. In most cases, not only her husband does not understand her, but also the surrounding environment does not. They take her as a male woman, a breaker of tradition, a woman who has grown a beard like Emade the heroine of Alobwed'Epie's. Alobwed'Epie's novel is of a great interest since it reflects

what frequently happens not only in public areas but also in the patriarchal family sphere. Then, all of this has captured our attention and aroused our motivation to treat this theme of confronting feminism.

## I.5. Research questions

Any research that claims for academic legitimacy goes along with the posing of relevant research questions. Given that the researcher's concern is to work towards answering those questions, we consider that it is worthwhile stating clearly the latter for they serve as guidance to the researcher's investigation. Since the main problem in this research is that the woman wants to get rid of man's dictates and the latter refusing to set her free, we would like to pose the following questions: What role does patriarchy play in the woman's search for assertiveness? What are alternative tools for the woman's liberation? All these queries will be answered in the course of this study.

## I.6. Research hypothesis

Written against the background of feminism, this study operates on the hypothesis that Alobwed'Epie in *The Lady with a Beard* presents a radical woman who, in an attempt to exercise her rights, is confronted by forces of tradition.

## I.7. Significance of the study

It is expected that findings from this study will enormously contribute to the woman's search for freedom. In other words, those who will read our work will be sensitized to the commitment of setting the woman free in all dimensions. On the other hand, women will also understand that they should be united in

their fight for freedom and assertiveness. In this way, our societies would live in internal and external harmony without stubbing too many rocks.

## I.8. Scope and delimitation

Alobwed'Epie has produced many works among which: *The Lady with a Beard*, *The Death Certificate*, *The Day God Blinked*, *The Lady with the Sting*, *The Bad Samaritan*, *What Next of Kin*? *Exhumed, Tried and Hanged*, *Crying in Hiccoughs* and *She Seized the Balls*. However, this work will primarily focus on *The Lady with a Beard* and how the author deals with the issue of confronting feminism by showing that patriarchy is a real and existing hindrance to the woman's assertiveness and emancipation. This novel has been chosen among the afore-mentioned ones in that it treats in its broadest angle the problems that most assertive women face today in their societies; confronted by both males and their fellow females who still ignore the principles of feminism. Besides this, Alobwed'Epie has developed more than one theme in the novel under study. But, our focus will be put on the confrontation of feminism. However, in our study we equally draw relevant references from related sources.

## I.9. Authorial Biography

Although Alobwed'Epie is among African writers who assist women in their process of emancipation, very little is known of him and his works. Professor Alobwed'Epie popularly known in the University of Yaoundé as Pa Alobs, was born at Ngomboku, Tombel Subdivision, Kupe/ Muaneneguba Division, South West Region of Cameroon in 1959. He studied at the University of Yaoundé where he obtained his BA English, and DES in English; university of Leeds England where he obtained his Masters in Folklore and Dialectology, and university of Yaoundé where he obtained his Doctorat d'Etat in English

language studies. Being a teacher of Structure of English, Sociolinguistics, Pragmatics and Creative Writing in the Department of English, University of Yaoundé 1, he founded the Yaoundé University Poetry Club in 1992 with the aim of demystifying poetry and making it an appreciable and effective vehicle for communicating with people of all walks of life. His training as a folklorist has influenced his poetry and sharpened his senses in novel writing. Thus, his poetry is greatly influenced by the English ballad and his novel by Bakossi folkways and language.

## I.10. Definition of key Terms

Some key words are defined for a proper understanding of the study. These are: feminism, gender and confronting.

Feminism: Lisa Tuttle in *Encyclopedia of Feminism* defines the concept "feminism" as a term applied to that strand within modern feminist thought which presumes female superiority and celebrates femininity; a brand of female essentialism which is usually associated with cultural feminism. She goes ahead to define a feminist as anyone who recognizes women's subordination and seeks to end it by whatever means and on whatever grounds. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary,* feminism is the belief and the aim that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men. It is the struggle to achieve this aim. Nambatya Agnes Kivumbi in "The Impact of Feminism on Kampala District 1980-1997" defines feminism as the movement of recognition of the claim of women for rights (legal, political, educational, and the rest) equal to those possessed by men.

Confronting: is the present participle of the infinitive verb "to confront". According to the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English,* to confront means to oppose, to stand opposed to, contradict, resist, dispute, challenge,

threaten, call into question, defy, face in defiance, .... *The Chambers Dictionary* defines the verb to confront as to come or to be face to face with; to face in opposition, to bring face to face, to compare. Then, confronting feminism means here, opposing feminism or standing opposed to feminism.

Gender: *The Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners* defines gender as the fact of being either male or female (=sex). According to Lisa Tuttle in *Encyclopaedia of Feminism,* gender is the term for the socially imposed division between the sexes. Whereas sex refers to biological, anatomical differences between male and female, gender refers to the emotional and psychological attributes which a given culture expects to coincide with physical maleness or femaleness. In this sense, gender is used as a term synonymous with sex-role.

**I.11. Theoretical Framework**

The Theory that will centre our discussion is feminism. In fact, this theory advocates the recognition of social and political rights of women and equal treatment of both genders. It analyses the situation of women with regard to their male counterparts. It also criticizes the patriarchal chauvinism which holds the views that a woman is inferior to man, that she cannot think by herself and cannot achieve important things without the help or assistance of men.

Then, a feminist is any person that is committed to the cause of equality, equal rights and equal opportunities for both sexes particularly in the liberation of women. A feminist is concerned with the question of patriarchal ideology and power relations between men and women.

According to the *Encyclopaedia of Feminism*, there are many theories of feminism such as liberal feminism, radical feminism, separatist, and Marxist feminism, to mention but a few. Liberal feminism asserts the equality of men and women through political and legal forms. It is an individualistic form of feminism that focuses on women's ability to show and maintain their equality through their own actions and choices. According to this theory, all women are capable of asserting their ability to achieve equality. Therefore, it is possible for change to happen without altering the existing structure of the society.

Radical feminism anchors on capitalist hierarchy which describes sexism as a defining feature of women's oppression. They believe that women can free themselves only when they get rid of what they consider as inherently oppressive and dominating system. For black feminism as a theory, it argues that sexism; class oppression and racism are inextricably bound together. Alice Schawlter and other womanists posit that black women experience a different and crueler kind of oppression than white women. Condemning the controversial gender relation that western feminism often perpetuates, many African feminists have opted for an alternative that is more consistent with an African perspective.

As far as psychoanalytic approach is concerned, it emerged in the early decades of the nineteenth century. It was firstly conceived by Freud (1836-1939). Its proponents and exponents are Carl Jang, Karl Abraham and Anna Freud, to name but a few. This theory deals with a work of literature primarily as an expression, in fictional form, of the state of mind and the structure of personality of the individual author. According to this theory, human personality consists of three portions, namely, the id (which incorporates libidinal and other desires), the ego ( which tries as best as it can to negotiate the conflicts between the insatiable demands of the id, the impossibly stringent

requirements of the superego, and the limited possibilities of gratification offered by the world of reality. A stable personality will be able to negotiate a fairly balanced interaction between the three layers), and superego (the internalized standards of morality and propriety). The foundation of Freud's contribution of psychoanalytic theory is the emphasis of the unconscious aspect of the human psyche. He demonstrated that like an iceberg, the human mind is structured. So, its great weight and density lie beneath the surface.

In *Introduction à la Psychanalyse*, Freud distinguishes between the level of conscious and conscious mental activity. He argues that the oldest and best meaning of the word conscious is any mental process, the existence of which we are obliged to assume. For Freud, if we want to be more accurate, we should modify the statement we call a process unconscious when we have to assume that it was a certain time, although that time we can do nothing about it.

It is worth of note that a number of feminist critics have adapted Freudian theory and mental process mechanism to their analysis of writings and reading of literary texts. In *Feminity and Domination*, Sandra Lee Barky argues that women's experience of feeding men's egos and tending men's wounds ultimately disempowers women. She notes that the kinds of emotional work practised by women in some services often cause these women to lose their emotional basis.

The feminist approach as a distinctive and concreted approach to literary studies was inaugurated in the 1960$^{s}$ and 1970$^{s}$ arising from the Civil Rights Movement. Important precursors of the feminist movement in the twentieth century include Virginia Woolf, Simone De Beauvoir, Mary Ellman, Kate Millet, and Adrienne Rich among others.

In her work *A Room of One's Own,* Woolf shows how women are prevented from aspiring to the higher echelons of society simply because of their sex. She goes ahead wondering about the reason why men drink wine and women water, why women are so much more interesting to men than men are to women,... and she discovers that the reason lies in patriarchy's neglect for women. In her work again she cites the words of Mr Oscar Browning "The best woman was intellectually the inferior of the worst man" (53). According to Browning, there is no intelligent, no reasonable woman in the world. In his view, even the most stupid man becomes excellent when compared to every woman whomsoever.

De Beauvoir in her famous book, *The Second Sex* criticizes patriarchal societies where the woman is considered as an intruder. She says that a woman is presented not as a man's partner, but his antithesis. As she continues to argue, one is not born a woman but is rather made a woman. According to Simone De Beauvoir, the fact that a woman is called the "other" and taken as someone without power or influence is a socially constructed system that patriarchy tries to perpetuate in order to favour and validate the selfhood of men. When she argues that women are perceived differently by men, she also believes that women are not inferior but made themselves subordinates. By culture, she calls for women to break out of being the "other" and realize their potentials.

As far as Mary Ellman is concerned, in her book *Thinking about Women,* she condemns the literature by men where the woman is portrayed negatively. In this book, she says that patriarchy has elaborated an ideology and propaganda that belittle women. In fact, they are not given their true portraiture but a false one. Mary Ellman regrets that every woman is seen in her forged negative face.

Kate Millet on her part in *Sexual Politics* has analysed western institutions as reflected in literature and has drawn a conclusion that those institutions are

developed in a way that dehumanizes women. Thus, western society is created for the man and not for the woman as she says. She also criticizes the male bias for Freud's psychoanalytic theory by showing how literature of that time is predominantly phallogocentric. In fact, in this theory, Freud defends the existence of penis envy in girls and takes it as a sign of power or superiority, therefore an instrument for control. This psychoanalytic theory has had another implication in that some women turned to be lesbians; an attitude that has provoked controversies among women. As a matter of fact, some women saw that by giving sex to their male counterparts, it was the only way still they had to be valued in the eyes of the men whereas others argued that when a penis penetrates a woman, she becomes malleable and dominated through this sexual relation. She continues to argue that "sex role assigns domestic service and attendance upon infants to the female, the rest of human achievement, interest, and ambition to the male" (35). She further adds that the men along their possessiveness track seek to protect their position by accepting responsibility taking base on the needs and values that permit them to elaborate the code of conduct of each gender.

Mary Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* presents women as an oppressed class from childhood, where boys and girls are not given the same privileges. She calls then women to improve themselves through education to be companions of men and not to be their inferior.

In general, feminist critics have three main assumptions that they share in common. These are: first, all feminists hold the basic view that civilization is patriarchal. That is, it is male centred and organized in a way that subordinates women. In all domains of the economy, politics, and religion, women are allowed only subordinate positions. Defined as the other, as the non-man, because of her lack of the phallus, women are considered to have created

nothing in modern civilization. Women were taught to accept this falsehood, and many came to believe in their inherent inferiority, and so collaborated in many ways against themselves.

Second, feminist critics expound the idea propounded by Simone De Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*, that gender is socially constructed and not biological. When she argues that one is not born but rather made a woman, she asserts this evident truth. As such, traits that are considered as masculine and feminine in identity and behaviour are largely determined by the pervasive patriarchal bias. When women are forced by custom to take up their role as emotional and irrational beings they become malleable.

Third and finally, feminists claim that patriarchy pervades those works which are through consensus canonized. Most of the works that constitute the literary canon are male centred-*Hamlet, Huckleberry, Finn, Ulysses, Oedipus Rex* among others. These are all works in which the male characters sufficiently demonstrate what patriarchy understands to be worthy. In these works, as feminists argue, women feature not as central but as marginal beings such that the works appear to be men speaking to men. The female reader remains an outsider and can also participate if she decides to assume a male position. Assuming a male position creates an illusion that she is considered when in reality she stays a woman. Women are thus made to take up the male point of view, sympathize with men, and work against themselves.

With these main contentions, feminists are however divided in terms of nationality, race, ideology and so forth. They begin to approach literary works from different angles and according to the problems each society faces. Therefore, feminist ideology gets widespread in the entire world. With this awakening, feminine writers and readers begin to call into question existing institutions and stereotypes.

## I.11. Review of Literature

The issue of women's oppression and liberation has been a topic of interest for many critics. Maria Mies in P*atriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale* regrets that patriarchy has taken a new orientation submitting the woman. Basing herself on the definition of patriarchy, she realizes that patriarchy literally means the rule of fathers. But today's male dominance goes beyond the rule of fathers. It includes the rules of husbands, of male bosses, of ruling men in most society institutions, in politics and economics.

Léon Abensour in *Histoire générale du féminisme des origines à nos jours* observes that religion has been a tool of discrimination between genders. In fact, since its origin, Catholic Church has been dominated and ruled by male figures. Jesus Christ the example to imitate has chosen twelve disciples but no one of them was a female. He continues to posit that after having been a cause of Adam's fall, the woman is now seen as a bowl of impurity. According to him, God has cursed her since when Eve mesmerized Adam in the Garden of Eden. Then a woman is seen as a source of sin. Consequently, it would be inaccurate to appoint her at church levels or let her lead rituals since she is liable to provoking another human-being's decline.

Jocelyne Gage Mathilda in *Woman, Church and State* argues that men have collaborated to systematically deprive women of their power and energy. She continues to say that religion is one of the most dangerous structures even invented in order to justify women's enslavement. According to her, the church should change its patriarchal orientation and involve the woman as well.

Mineke Schipper in *Mother Africa on a Pedestal: The Male Heritage in African Literature and Criticism* says that in any given cultural context the ruling group

produces images and conceptions of the other to legitimize the stutus quo. According to him, tradition deprives women of prerogatives that would bring into prominence feminine power and prowess.

Micere Mugo in *The Role of Woman in the Struggle for Freedom* says that there exist stereotypes, images of woman that suggest negativism, weakness and even inborn stupidity in women. Women are supposed to be idlers, gossips, coward; fools so on and so forth as opposed to males who are strong, intelligent and a number of other admirable things.

Sylvia Leith-Ross in *African Woman* states that, in the strategies patriarchy uses to subdue a woman, taboos are also common. In these taboos, men as a group are allowed to perform some activities or rituals whereas this right is denied to women. In respect of this, women get convinced that they can call curse upon themselves in case they don't observe those taboos. As she continues to express it, the regret is that to make taboos vivid, patriarchal societies try to establish a link between some social occurrences and probable violations of taboos so that women can be wrapped with threat and not happen to think deeply about the veracity of these taboos. Sylvia Leith Ross goes farther to say that, education has been selective. Only boys were supposed to go to school whereas girls were seen as house manageresses. According to her, patriarchy in its essence judges girls' schooling as useless since women's role at home does not require high intellect on the one hand. On the other hand, patriarchy is afraid that education can sharpen women's minds and push them to call into question the role they are assigned by this social system. She also adds that it was bad for a woman to have more education than her husband.

Elizabeth Fox-Genovèse in *Feminism without Illusions* states that religion is a tool of patriarchy where the woman is rather a mere observer and helpless. She

criticizes the fact that no woman has ever been pope or priest, but short of that women have done almost everything that men have done, albeit not as regularly or in incomparable numbers. She also goes ahead to demonstrate that feminine awakening is exposed to men's violence. In fact, the growing attention to men's violence against women and children (rape, wife beating, child molestation and incest) directly testifies to and especially men's discomfort with the dramatic changes in relevance of male strength to social and political power. According to her, there is a good reason to believe that many men frustrated by a world they have no hope of controlling in the wake of erosion of their advantages and social relevance of their physical superiority, are increasingly tempted to use that strength in the situation in which it still gives them an advantage in their personal relation with women.

Felice N. Schwartz in *Breaking with Tradition* illustrates how women are limited by family conventions traditionally established. He says that the conventions of family life and social mores and traditional roles women have inherited also contain certain barriers for women. He believes that women themselves can play a significant role in changing the status quo. Schwartz further shows that the status quo is unacceptable because it obstructs the woman from going ahead. He concludes that men and women are agreeable to define and pursue their goals freely, regardless of their gender.

Mugaba Vincent in "Feminist or Sexist" states that to maintain women in static state of growth, men have invented all kinds of traditions in culture. So, for him, self-realization is necessary to women to overcome patriarchy and societal constraints. He goes ahead to argue that women have to lose the confinement to realize their full potential. For human being, to gain recognition, to be noticed and not to live as a robot programmed self-realization is the key. He continues to say that the cost may be high but the benefits are great for the mind set free

from the conventions that imprison the soul. For the woman, the battle is to break out of the sexist culture cage which makes her a lesser being. She has to fight to be recognized as a human being.

Eva Evers Rosanders in her book *Transforming Female Identities* states that women to varying degrees suffer from male domination and socio-cultural norms and values. Here, she shows how the women suffer when they raise their heads to advocate their freedom and rights. They are marginalized by their society and they are considered as abnormal. They face many problems while challenging the forbidden or taboos.

Abena Busia in *Testimonies of Exile* refers to womanhood as a balance of pains and joy, anger and sadness from which wisdom results. She says that they are the weaker gender but forces to be reckoned with those who have the power to laugh beauty into life despite the hardship suffered through it. Busia acknowledges the fact that women have fallen victims of ignorance, the broken pieces of their dreams and self-destruction but the fire within continues to burn and the fragments of lost women and their hopes have been recovered by female hands. She concludes by proffering her belief that recompense shall be awarded, that those living in want shall surely be filled.

Aline Niyonizigiye in "Debunking Patriarchy in Yvonne Vera's *Without a Name*, *Under the Tongue* and *Butterfly Burning*" says that women have been suffering from male oppression in silence. They were always asked to put all things under the tongue. As she continues to argue, women progressively attempt to debunk male chauvinism. However, the problem is that whatever a woman does in order to liberate herself in debunking traditional conceptions, obstacles are always in her way and consequently she finds herself in a total desperation and in a regrettable situation than the one she was in before. She

also adds that in African societies, there is no one to plead for women, no one to care about them.

Boniface Nimbona in "Breaking the Myths: The Case of Women in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*" states that women's views about men's behaviour are not the same. Some accept to bear bad treatments without any complains while others would like to challenge the men's assumptions, stereotypes about them. He goes ahead to say that women and men do not converge on how women are treated within the society. Men consider women's status as suitable. However, women on their part propose or would like their status to be changed. Among women, the issue about their place in society is not agreed on by all of them. Traditionalist women are happy with their status within the society whereas others want change.

Ernest Ndayizeye in "A Feminist Analysis of Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*" stipulates that in women's emancipation there are problems for those who are unable to perceive the truth from different beliefs and that it occurs by different reasons such as environment. He goes further to say that all women have to join the radical cast which calls upon men to know that besides the restrictions which subordinate women, a feminist woman cannot accept to be treated as immoral because women want to take care for themselves, to control their own life and body.

Jean Marie Nemeye in "Gender Roles and Women's Liberation in Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*" argues that a large number of women around the world continue to suffer oppression in the home and in the community with devastating physical, emotional and psychological effects. The crimes against women have created an environment of fear in which many women are afraid of living their homes. They are beaten, chastised, dragged by the hair. The night is

not interesting in women. He continues by stating that although a man and a woman may be equal in all aspects, yet when they are husband and wife, there is a certain degree of respect in which wives must give to their husbands. Therefore, it is suggested that men should always consider their wives' opinions and not just take the power to make decisions. This would be so in order to avoid frustration and misunderstanding between men and women and between a wife and a husband.

Elie Niyimubona in "The Quest for Self-Assertion: The African Woman in Buchi Emecheta's *Second-Class Citizen* and Nuruddin Farah's *From A Crooked Rib*" says that women's actions and attitudes is a response to the aggressive attitude of their men. He also puts that the husbands are not simply the ordinary partners but rather the masters. And this is an impact on the welfare of the household. In fact, women will not love their husbands but rather will hate and fear them. Moreover, he contends that African culture attributes men and women different duties as roles are shared between men and women. A man is considered more authoritative in the eyes of a woman and she has to accept his authority. Women are forced to recognize men's ability of managing everything. In addition, women are aware of being under the control of men whether stronger than them or not. A woman accepts to be beaten even if she may be able to return him the beatings.

Shadrack A. Ambanassom, lecturer, critic and novelist, university of Yaoundé 1, argues that *The Lady with a Beard* portrays a situation of conflict whereby a woman wages a war against patriarchal institutions. He further argues that Alobwed'Epie first brandishes the vigour and determination of a female character that is eager at challenging patriarchal barriers and then reduces her grandeur, portraying the failure of a woman of manly attitudes. (Qtd in The Eduart Awards for Cameroonian Literature, 6).

The Eduart Awards for Cameroonian Literature comments that professor Alobwed'Epie through his writing strives to promote an open society where life in the community and the lives of community are open to scrutiny and thus intent to lead towards transparency in the service of the community. Like Greek dramatists, he enables us to laugh at ourselves with a view to improve. Alobwed'Epie writes what he experiences. He writes fictionalized reality depicting the weakness of man; in general and leaders in particular.

Georges Ngide Ewane in "Dynamic Organicism in Alobwed'Epie's *The Lady with a Beard"* states that dynamic organicism as revealed in Alobwed' Epie's *The Lady with a Beard* refers to an energetic and driving force, instrumental in growth or change; a universal literary phenomenon whereby the writer transcends the ordinary view of things, sees a reality beyond the corporal frame of existence and through the imagination seeks an ideal and works towards changing the corrupt order of the universe by reinstating order and moving in backwards to its natural state of felicity. He goes ahead to say that Emade in *The Lady with a Beard* suffers isolation because she realizes that there exist reparations for her attempted breaking of the organic unit. George Ngide Ewane adds that Alobwed'Epie intimates that Emade's tendency to place herself above other women is the cause of her problem. It is only by reconciling with her community and tradition that she will be able to live a peaceful life. (Qtd in The Eduart Awards for Cameroonian Literature, 7)

"The African Books Collective" says that *The Lady with the Sting* is sequel to *The Lady with a Beard.* In the two novels, Alobwed'Epie compares and contrasts the masculinity and femininity of the two heroines, Emade and her daughter Ntube. In the first novel, Emade shuns her sex and clinks to a false masculine mask. In spite of her achievements, she fails to debunk the old system. In *The Lady with the Sting*, her daughter Ntube, a less charismatic

heroine, allows nature take its course and in the end she seizes the opportunity the erring old system gives her and destroys it.

Lukong Pius Nyuylime in "The Bakossi Iron Lady" argues that *The Lady with a Beard* depicts the price of steadfastness. He says that Alobwed'Epie in indirect approach points the image of ladies who have engraved their names in the world's political annals. The Indira Gandhis, the Margaret Thatchers and the Benazir Bhuttos are well portrayed in *The Lady with a Beard*, the beard representing the steadfastness that accounted for their success story. (Qtd in The Eduart Awards for Cameroonian Literature, 8)

Médiatrice Nizigiyimana in "Woman's Self -Assertion in Alobwed'Epie's *The Lady with a Beard*" says that Alobwed'Epie presents us an extraordinary woman who is ready to challenge the forbidden in her society, and she is determined to remove barriers set by patriarchy and societal norms. She has an extraordinary courage and will to challenge the Atieg as well as the Muabag people. She goes ahead to say that Emade wants to destroy false images attributed to women that they cannot achieve better things. According to her, Emade is a new woman who represents a theory of personhood where the individual exists as an independent entity for herself to realize her own potential for happiness rather than accepting a subordinate role in her society. Emade knows that it would be impossible to live under society's traditional mentality.

Goreth Niyonsaba in "The Woman at the Cross-Roads Betwixt and Between Tradition and Liberation in Alobwed'Epie's *The Lady with a Beard* and Virginia Woolf's *To the LightHouse*" says that whereas traditional men are considered as assets in the society, women are viewed as insignificant, invisible

or more less as liabilities and only meant to satisfy the egos of their male counterparts.

Albertine Akindavyi in her work "Reshaping Female Roles: A Revolutionary Woman in Alobwed'Epie's *The Lady with a Beard"* states that Emade, the heroine of the novel wants to be independent. She refuses to continue suffering. Obedience to the traditional norms only made her a victim of tradition. She recognizes that obedience to the dictates of tradition only leads to misery. The heroine develops a strong thirst for freedom. Emade stands up and takes decision to direct her life as she wishes. She refuses to submit to the cultural norms which confines her. She challenges the customs and patriarchy, which portray the woman as the one who stays home and accepts all that she is told.

Arlette Karire in "Gender and Social Vision in Alobwed'Epie's *The Lady with a Beard*" posits that Alobwed'Epie is a defender of women because of his choice of the heroine of the book and makes her the archetype of male resistance. The author underscores a major point that it is through education of women that patriarchy can be defeated. Hence, the educated Cameroonian women are the best hope for championing the cause for emancipation of women in society. She goes ahead to say that Alobwed' Epie wants to show that we must prepare to adjust the conditions of the society which will enable men and women to participate as equal members not only in the family and work place, but also in every field of the society. In order to achieve those objectives, it is necessary to review the systems and customs based on stereotyped gender roles from the point of view of gender role equality. Furthermore, she says that a close analysis of the way Alobwed 'Epie depicts Emade, reveals that it is necessary to change the family oriented views underlying these systems and customs into individual oriented views, and to establish frameworks of society which neutrally apply to every citizen.

Dionésie Nduwimana in "Deconstructing Patriarchal Images in Alobwed'Epie's *The Lady with a Beard* and Flora Nwapa's *Efuru"* argues that Alobwed'Epie presents us an extraordinary woman who debunks time honoured ideas of male chauvinism and proves herself a male woman reversing the exaggerated and false claims or beliefs of male superiority. He goes ahead to say that this woman is nicknamed The-lady-with-a-beard because of her charisma to expose and challenge the false claims of man's superiority to women. In a series of events, she appears to be adamant and stubborn in her behaviour, decisions and determination.

Though we have reviewed many critics, the present study differs from the above reviewed studies in that it looks directly into the theme of confronting feminism in Alobwed' Epie's *The Lady with a Beard.* In other words, it shows the woman being watered down by patriarchy due to her attempt to challenging male chauvinism. Critics in previous studies have not dealt with this theme.

## I.13. Structure of the work

This study is divided into three chapters preceded by a general introduction and closed by a general conclusion. The general introduction gives a general background of the whole work, the statement of the problem, the aim of the study, its motivation, the theoretical framework, scope and delimitation, definition of key terms, review of theories and the structure of the work.

The first chapter entitled "Gender Imbalance" shows how genders are differentiated in Bakossi society (South-West Cameroon) and it carries out strategies Bakossi patriarchal society uses to ensure its enhancement and keep blind the woman with regard to her exploitation by the male world.

The second chapter "Feminism and Female Radical character" displays the female radical character through Emade the heroine, and the essence of feminism through her actions.

The third chapter shows what are the strategies or attitudes developed by men to set back Emade's feminist inclination. Then, the male woman who proved herself nine women put together suffers isolation and she is reduced to a mere superstitious woman who seeks refuge in Christianity. Besides this, the chapter examines the author's projection of the new African woman as seen through Emade, therefore the message the author of the source novel is sending to his readers, particularly Africans.

The general conclusion sums up the whole work, and carries out the major findings, recommendations and suggestions to later research.

# CHAPTER I

## GENDER IMBALANCE

This chapter examines gender imbalance in Bakossi society (South–West Cameroon). It shows how genders are differentiated in this society and it carries out strategies Bakossi patriarchal society uses to ensure its enhancement and keep blind the woman with regard to her being exploited by the male world.

Historically and culturally, the issue of gender goes together with patriarchy but, gender being a cultural meaning of sex. Then, patriarchy is a frequent organizational social system largely found in African societies. In these societies the woman is not given the place she would have and genders are differentiated in terms of attributions. In fact, the woman is limited in her rights and prerogatives. Sometimes, she does not even realize this discrimination due to the fact that the patriarchal society elaborates strategies by which women will accept those imposed limitations without hesitation. These strategies may include traditional beliefs, stereotypes, taboos and so on. In what follows, we examine gender imbalance in Bakossi patriarchal society. The basic text is Alobwed'Epie's *The Lady with a Beard.*

In the context of Africa, the woman is seen not as a collaborator, but as a servant. From this situation, she suffers a lot in that she is not a person who can have full rights to live and enjoy her life in society. She is oppressed and exploited by the male world. Her exploitation is prepared since her girlhood. In fact, when a girl is still in her father's compound, she gets strict education and she is regarded as a source of income. Besides this, a girl who would later become a woman is told to be always submissive to her husband. To ensure this effectively, since her early girlhood, she is taught manners of respecting boys. They tell her not to play with them and not to answer back or retaliate even in

case she is offended. In addition to this, their presumed vulnerability urges their parents to forbid their daughters to come back home late in the evening because they can be victims of rape. Girls are still in many cases forbidden to participate in festivities especially those that take place in the evening for fear that they can misbehave. Furthermore, in old days, girls were not allowed to pass near a male gathering. A girl was also taught how to react positively to a critical remark she would be given. If she went astray from these moral prescriptions, she had to suffer from a severe punishment. Even nowadays, she is told to be home. In order to confine her at home and not go out for leisure, she is taught a kind of morality putting in evidence that it is a woman that cooks meal, cleans the house and checks if everything is well set inside the house.

The following excerpt shows how Emade is worried about her daughter's going home late. She posits: "My worry now is Ntube. She can't return today. It is late for her to return alone. She only returns tomorrow with my son Ewang-Ename when he comes for the burial" (43). The following day, Emade tells her daughter: "You must return now. It is getting late. You must cross the hammock before it is dark" (58). To this invitation to go home, Ntube pleads to go back with the school children who brought the coffin and other things but her mother retorts "You want to travel with boys in the night? Get ready. I am going to see you off myself" (58)

From the quotation above, we realize that a girl is a fragile person who always needs protection from males. These ones are known to be protectors because of their physical invulnerability. Equally, it is recommended that a girl should not travel with boys particularly when it is dark since she can be victim of rape. That's why apart from household chores that imprison the woman at home, her physical and biological apparatus also contributes to it.

In few words, childhood is a good moment for patriarchal planners to begin inculcating this submissive and discriminative morality to little girls. So long as they are still young, the teaching is liable to be internalized forever. When she becomes a woman, her inferior status imposes her a division of labour which allots a large share of heavy work to her. She has then no way to refuse since a submissive behaviour is expected of her towards her husband. The society also recognizes right of a man to beat his wife and the fact that marriage often involves little companionship between spouses. A woman belongs to the kitchen.

Emade says it to her daughter Ntube: "child, when we named you, we placed you on the road as a sign that you belonged to the road. We put you on the eaves of a hut to show that you were a woman and belonged to the kitchen. Don't ever claim to be a man" (78). From this citation, we understand that a girl is differentiated from a boy. She belongs to the world, while a boy belongs to the family. When she grows up, anyone can take her into marriage but a boy remains the guardian of the family and a guarantee of its continuity. Among her tasks, kitchen is her attribute. Then, the division of labour that patriarchy assigns each gender determines one's failure in one's attribution though one can be irresponsible of it.

In these African societies, a woman is known to be liable to making all sorts of mistakes. Thus, any familial mishappening such as barrenness is attributed to her. In this way, when a woman does not give birth, she is accused of being cleaning the lineage of her husband, covering or at least forgetting that sometimes the husband can be the cause of it. Then, it is said that a barren woman suffers a communal anathema. They also believe that it is a bad omen for a girl who has had her first ablutions after puberty to meet as the first person in the morning a barren woman. On the other hand, when a woman gets lucky to

bear children, she does not even have to propose a name of the baby. This right belongs to the father and the child also belongs exclusively to its father and his family. It does not belong to its mother or to her family. The child belongs to the father's land and not to the mother's land. Then, we can ascertain that in these patriarchal societies, a woman does not have a good social consideration.

In the same perspective, Bakossi society is organized in such a way that the woman is belittled. This transcends through some instances allowing men to do or have what women are not allowed. Some representations of a woman's image are developed and rituals are selective in terms of guidance. First, there is a representation of a woman that spoils her image. In fact, a woman is seen in her weak position. She is supposed unable of doing anything without a masculine help. If she does, the success remains unattainable. This representation has been incorporated in female's brain in such a way that their belief in it becomes irrefutable. Alobwed'Epie through his character Ahone shows how she is telling her sister Emade about the inherent incapacity of action that everywoman has. She says: "(...) you should know that a woman's urine does not cross a beam" (36).

In this quotation, the use of "you should" shows that though Emade could forget, she would at least remember it. That is, she would remember that a woman is incapable of any action. This psychologically acquired incapacity has a consequence of making women under-estimate themselves and be always subordinate to men. Sometimes, women who have made their own these patriarchal biased principles happen to act against themselves by ostracizing any woman who tries to break through. This is the case of Eduke in *The Lady with a Beard,* a female neighbour of Emade, who takes part in convincing other women to ostracize Emade from all feminine groups. However, one of them, Mboke, suggests that it is not good to follow whatever men say without

thinking at first. This woman says: "If men-mongers, husband-snatchers connive to undo such an illustrious lady, you follow them sheepishly?" *(19).* This comes to give strength to the idea propounded by feminists that sometimes, women are made to take up the male point of view, sympathize with men and work against themselves.

Tradition in Bakossi society plays a paramount role in discriminating women. As a matter of fact, the guidance of important social ceremonies requires having incarnated Muankum, that is a spirit considered as protector of Bakossi tribe. This incarnation cult is exclusively reserved to some selected men but no woman. Consequently, there is no social ceremony that will be led by a woman because of their non-incarnation in Muankum. Furthermore, distinguished sports are also allowed to men only. To give much light to this, one of the characters in the novel under study wonders flabbergasted: "Do women wrestle with gorillas at the cross-roads" (35)

In this, we realize that there are some achievements that put in evidence talents and bravery of persons. In this situation, if a woman is let to take part in them, she can show her prowess and claim for men's prerogatives. In addition, other women can see that women are also able to perform men's tasks. This is the reason why Bakossi society does not allow women to take part in actions that can reveal their performance. Furthermore, among activities that fall into the prerogatives of a man, beating the drum is common. However, for a woman beating the drum is a taboo. In case she does, she is said to violate her nature and can cause a wrath to the society. That's the reason why this action has been a source of one of the conflicts Emade, the heroine of the novel under study, has with Atieg and Muabag people.

In Bakossi society, men and women are differentiated in terms of human value. Generally, as a living man in this society values more than a woman, even a man's corpse is more valuable than that of a woman. In fact, when a man dies, a drum announcing his death is beaten. This drum is to be played by a man and this one must have incarnated Muankum. However, in case it is a woman who dies, the matter is seen as a simple one. In this scenario, we see Emade at her stepsister's death Mechane, playing a drum to announce her death; an action that causes Ahone to shiver with fear because Emade is violating her nature by doing what falls into the prerogatives of initiated men. Ahone begs the old man who comes first to assume the responsibility of having played the drum when men come but this one refuses in that this may charge him a very fine especially that it was announcing a woman's death. He states: "To assume responsibility for playing the drum eulogizing a dignitary who had once incarnated Muankum, then it turns out to be announcing the death of a woman may earn me a very heavy fine" (38). And Alone retorts: " (...) that is true. But you will say you made a mistake-that you were referring to the late woman's late husband and not to herself. This will earn a smaller fine than if the truth were revealed." (38)

A deep-rooted conception is hard to eradicate. Ahone herself is convinced that Emade made a mistake in beating the drum, and not only beating, but also that the drum was announcing the death of a woman. In this way, it will be difficult to get rid of some taboos and discriminative actions since most of the women don't see themselves what is the reality hidden beyond. This case of gender imbalance prevails in many African societies. As a matter of fact, African stereotypes view a boy as superior to a girl. Therefore, a woman who does not beget male infants is supposed to be erasing the family continuity in that boys are supposed to perpetuate the family. This is the reason why Emade, the heroine of Alobwed'Epie's *The Lady with a Beard* finds herself at cross-roads

when she regrets during the door-closing ceremony after Mechane's death. She exclaims:

> Yes! (...) I now see why Bakossi people say, a female child is useless. That is, that begetting daughters is a waste of time. Would we have been performing this rite if Wobe were a boy? Would we have been performing it if she were not married to a stranger? Wobe now has four children. One of them would have come to inherit this compound. (90-91)

From the above quotation, the uselessness of a girl comes from the fact that, to get married in a patriarchal society, a girl is supposed to move home to her husband. If her parents haven't begotten a male infant, by the time the last of the family dies, the compound becomes a forest. We also find that all four children Wobe has got are girls. Therefore, none of them can come and occupy their grand-mother's compound since girls do not inherit properties. Furthermore, the departure of a girl for marriage reduces her family in terms of number and the children she will get will belong to her husband and his family. However, the marriage of a boy is like increasing or widening his father's family since the girl comes to live in her husband's compound. Then, it is obvious that this case of girl's or women's misconsideration originates from maternity where the birth of a girl is seen as mourning whereas that of a boy provokes jubilation.

This is what Buchi Emecheta in *The Joys of Motherhood* denounces when Nnu Ego gives birth to a boy and that men start rejoicing: dancing and drinking simply because the child is a boy. "The man truly started celebrating with palm wine and cigarettes from Nnu Ego's stock and celebration went on till dawn" (53). However, when Nnu Ego bears twin girls, she feels ashamed and her tears are noticed when their father looks at them and says: "Nnu Ego, what are these?

Could you not have done better? Where will all sleep eh? What will they eat?" (172). Nnu Ego regrets that even her husband refuses to name the twin girls.
In this last quotation, the use of "could you not have done better" shows that a girl is socially downgraded. She is nothing as they say in Burundian culture that "Umukõbwa ntā mwâna, ni akarago k'ábarâye" (a girl is not a child like other children (male ones), she will not keep her father's compound since any passerby can take her). On the other hand, we realize that many people in Africa do not have enough knowledge of biology of reproduction. In fact, they believe that it is up to the woman to bear a girl or a boy.

A deep analytic thinking would reveal that though men underrate women, there isn't much they can do without feminine help. Indeed, by the time men want their wives to bear male infants only, if it were at least possible, humanity could disappear progressively. This is the same case as both generalized lesbianism and homosexuality. Therefore, the masculine world should understand that men are there because women are also there and vice-versa. Then, there is a meaningful interrelationship between man and woman. Mutual interdependence of the sexes is consistent. Emade shows how it is painful to give birth though males seem to forget their origin and how their mothers suffered to beget them. She tells Ntube, her daughter:

> Your mother carried you in her womb for nine months. Within the period, she avoided all choice food in order to protect you and herself. She bore the pain at birth. She clung to a pole to push you forth. She did all that for the love of you. Her ordeal is not over. As long as she nurses you she has to abstain from certain foods, especially the food of marriage to keep you healthy and alive. She will sleep when you let her sleep, and wake when you cause her to. (77)

From this passage, the evidence is that a woman plays a great role in human development. She bears the destiny of the world through her attribute of child bearing and childrearing. She can even die from her pregnancy. She restricts herself from her ordinary preferences. However, patriarchal claims continue to spoil her image and this causes women to suffer a lot when their importance in the society is fussed over.

In this perspective, when Emade, the heroine of Alobwed'Epie's *The Lady with a Beard* challenges patriarchal chauvinism in violating tradition, she has realized that it is a dangerous weapon that challenges womanhood and prevents women from exhibiting the interrelationship and interdependence that exist between men and women. She then joins the view of Nambatya Agnes Kivumbi in "The impact of Feminism on Kampala District" When she says:

> It is the woman who carries the destiny of the human being from conception in the womb through child birth and even later in out daily life. If you are a man, have you ever stopped to think tender care of the dear ones who look after you, be it mother, sister, wife, daughter or aunt? Have you, however, the assistance maybe? There is no much men could do to survive and live a decent happy life without the support of women. Men as human beings are dependent on women in most cases. (23)

Furthermore, in many rural families, when men move out everyday in the morning leaving behind their wives, the latter get busy working in gardens and other innumerable activities to sustain their families. Those men spend their time drinking only. However, when they go home late in the evening or at night, they ask for food and do not happen to realize that the woman is the pillar, the cornerstone of the family. Then, the role of the woman should not be limited to

reproduction only. Instead, she plays many roles. Her work includes not only a reproductive role (childbearing and connected responsibilities) required to guarantee the maintenance and reproduction of the labour force, but also a reproductive work as a secondary income earner. In addition, she is involved in community managing work. From this, we ascertain that the woman's role in society is not limitable. This is what Emade shows us when she says:

> When you get to a village where men shriek to call each other, you call such husks men?(35), is it the carrying of palm wine gourds, all about that matters in death ceremony? (66), Amue, your food is safe. Your drinks are safe. If you want more, Wobe will give you. That has been your relationship with her... (46).

However, these men want to be called men while they have no merit of it. All that matters for them is about food and drinks. Apart from this, they forget their responsibilities as men.

If we consider that in a patriarchal society a woman cannot control a home, we also have to make sure that there is no home that can exist without a woman. In fact, the education of children falls in her responsibility for she looks after them since their early childhood until they grow up. Then, all of us are what our mothers have decided that we become or at least we are a part of what they wanted us to be. Therefore, they need respect and a tender treatment as men do. In this regard, we see how Emade contributes in upbringing her daughter Ntube, socially and intellectually. She takes her to Basseng Mission in order to study. This decision will play a future important role in liberating women as illustrated in *The Lady with the Sting.*

In case the patriarchal masculine world would be reluctant to understand that women need respect, freedom and equal treatment, they would imagine how a respectful person can lack respect for others. Also, they will be invited to think about the relation between femininity and humanity in order to ascertain their existence. In this perspective, gender imbalance has no reason to be. Rather, difference of sexes should be perceived through their complementary aspect. For instance, there are some social problems especially mental ones, of which the origin can be located in maternity or infancy. As a matter of fact, children need their mother more than any other person especially in their early infancy for a good psychological development. In this case, a child who hasn't enjoyed its mother's charming contact, or one who grew up in a long absence of mother can develop a state of anxiety and mental depression. As a consequence, the family in particular and the society in general can be affected by resulting problems. Therefore, we all share the responsibility to rethink of the relation between our biological characteristics and our social roles and responsibility. That is the reason why in a society where there is a division of labour along sex lines, no sex group should be considered more significant than, or superior to the other because both groups complement each other to sustain the economic, and ultimately the social life of the society.

Analysing deeply patriarchal societies can allow us to find the reason why some activities are preferably inserted in men's prerogatives. In fact, in Bakossi society the ancestors who have set up a rule preventing women from digging graves may know why they did it. For instance, Alobwed'Epie shows us that after the digging of a grave some entertainment such as food and drinks are given to those who participated in digging. However, as years go until time immemorial, the taboo will be legitimized without knowing why it is so. In this, we have Mbwoge, a character in *The Lady with a Beard* questioning Mesumbe the old man about the past: "You are the only one who can tell us how things

were more than a hundred years ago. Have you ever heard that a woman has dug a grave?" (49)

As far as Mbwoge is concerned, tradition is tradition, what has been a taboo will continue to be a taboo and what matters is not the reason why it is a taboo but that tradition be observed. However, Alobwed'Epie shows the reason behind: "If they allowed her go on, she would deprive them of the grave-digging entertainment. Furthermore, it would be a challenge to Muabag manhood" (45).

From this, it is worth of note that some of them know that apart from entertainment they can lose; there is no other consequence such as curse if a woman digs a grave. Moreover, to see that Emade violates tradition with arrogance in Muabag land, given that she comes from Atieg, can cause men to lose their potency in the eyes of Muabag women. In this way, it would be a shame upon them when a supposed weak person in the society challenges them. As Esong, another character says it, a person like a man can challenge other men but not a woman. If it turns to be a woman challenging men, the case appears inapprehensible. Astonished, Esong says: "How can a woman hold us by our noses in our villages?" (48). This shows that a woman is not estimated.

To maintain men's supremacy over women, Bakossi society uses a system of imbalance in punishment label in order to validate women's inferiority and vulnerability. This is what Sango Mesumbe, the old man in Muambang advises young men. He says:

> If a woman offends our village, we should not give her the treatment we will give to a man. Let us not beard that woman. Let us not give her a mane. It is difficult to handle mudfish out of the net. (51)

As for the same mistake, different punishments are given according to the sex or gender, people will see in many ways that a man will be heavily punished because he is strong enough to endure severe punishments. Consequently, a woman will be seen as weak, therefore a pitiable human being.

Bakossi patriarchal society has reinforced its enhancement to the extent that emotional states through songs are exulted within a sexual dichotomy. In fact, there exist songs proper to men and songs for women. It is then forbidden for women to sing a men's song because it can cause a wrath of the deity on them. For instance; on the occasion of a naming ceremony, other women admonish Emade for the song she puts forth. They say: "That is a Muankum song. That song can cause the wrath of the deity on us. What type of song is that? That is not a birth song. That is not a women's song. That is a men's song" (79).

In this quotation, we realize the role played by traditional religion in making women respect scrupulously whatever falls into men's prerogatives. In fact, Muankum is a spirit known as a deity protecting Bakossi tribe. It is then venerated and is known not to tolerate any trespass against traditional values and taboos. In this way, Bakossi patriarchal society has a sure way to inculcate its morality in the masses since religion appears as an opium of the people; something that will prevent them from having their own opinions. Its power is then to make people quiet and easily controlled.

When people have been psychologically conquered, there occurs a moment when they take their masters as omniscient. Bakossi women have a false impression that men know more than they do. In fact, Emade has had a bad omen. She wants then a soothsayer to unravel the reality beyond. However, the woman soothsayer she meets advises her to contact a man soothsayer because it is the latter that can see the reality beyond this bad omen. She states: "If I were

you I would go to a male diviner. Female diviners may not get to the depth of things warped up with male overtones" (110). In this, it becomes noticeable that women trust a lot in men. They attribute them insight and intelligence, qualities that are not found in women as they consider it. This is due to some stereotypes portraying a woman as an irrational human being. In fact, since long ago, the woman has been kept away from education. Boys are sent to school whereas girls are kept home. From this situation, women are denied one of the basic human rights. Since education broadens mind, illiterate women will not be able to detect messages hidden behind tradition, taboos and stereotypes. In this way, their exploitation by men will be easily maintained for none of them will defend their rights owing to their ignorance. They are said to have inborn stupidity and that there is no logical thinking they can have about serious matters.

Sometimes, women are supposed to be of unstable nature, that they have no control of themselves especially when they have drunk. For instance, the Acoli society in North Uganda believes that a female ought to be under the control of a male because when at liberty, she may misuse her freedom, ending up in loose living. In other words a female could never be trusted with complete freedom because of her alleged inferior and unstable nature-and it is good to confine her to domestic affairs because when free and not under male control, she is prone to misbehave, she gets drunk, loses self-control and may indulge in extra-marital sex. However, cases of polygamy are recognized whereas polyandry is intolerable. Many women happen to believe in these stereotypes without any critical view. That is the reason why feminists like Mary Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of the Woman* calls women to improve themselves through education in order to be companions of men and not to be their inferior.

In the same perspective, Alobwed' Epie's main character Emade has made her own this message of famous feminists. In fact, she has sent her daughter Ntube

to the Mission school to improve her knowledge on the detriment of her son Ewang-Ename. Through this woman, Alobwed'Epie shows that education is an efficient tool that will liberate women from their exploitation.

To conclude the chapter, we set forth to examine strategies used by Bakossi patriarchal society in order to ensure its enhancement. In this regard, we have found that in Bakossi society, a man is seen as a strong and intelligent person as opposed to the woman who is supposed weak and stupid or at least limited in her ways of thinking comparatively to the man. Moreover, genders are differentiated in terms of human value and attributions. In fact, tradition, taboos, stereotypes and traditional religion play a big role in limiting the woman. A woman is not allowed to guide rituals, to dig graves, to take part in actions highlighting her prowess such as fighting with gorillas at cross-roads, to beat drums and to settle borders disputes. Furthermore, funerals are also differentiated in terms of gender in that the death of a man is announced through beating drums whereas that of a woman is not. All these limitations and unequal treatment of genders have aroused a feeling of dissatisfaction and frustration in some women. The latter now think of liberating themselves and begin to challenge manhood as the following chapter shows it.

# CHAPTER II

## FEMINISM AND FEMALE RADICAL CHARACTER

This chapter examines the female radical character through Emade the heroine of Alobwed'Epie's *The Lady with a Beard* and the essence of feminism through her actions. By definition, we have seen that feminism is the belief and aim that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men. It is also the struggle to achieve this aim according to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary.* In the same way, the *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners* shows that radicalism is a way of thinking or behaving that is based on the belief that important political or social changes are necessary. It goes further to show that a radical change or way of doing something is new and very different from the usual way. Then, these definitions go together with the focus of this chapter.

Tradition in patriarchal society has particularly been a sure vehicle of male chauvinism. It has created frustration in women's hearts by reducing them to house servants and males' slaves. This situation has therefore set them in uncomfortable position to the extent that some of them make an effort to redefine themselves while others think they owe a debt to patriarchy. This inspiration of claiming for equal rights and equal opportunities as those possessed by men is what has been referred to as feminism.

Abensour Léon in *Histoire générale du féminisme des origines à nos jours* shows the evolving stage of the woman. He states:

> Hier considérée par tous les docteurs de la loi comme un être inférieur, tenue par l'opinion publique pour incapable de vivre

> sans l'aide masculine, exclue par l'infirmité de son esprit des conseils de la cité, la femme se hisse peu a peu hors du gouffre où , pour les siècles et des siècles, la malédiction de Jehovah précipita Eve. La voici prête à atteindre le faîte d'où l'homme longtemps jeta sur son infortunée compagne des regards de mépris. (5)

Translation :

> Previously taken by all the specialists of law as an inferior human being, seen by the public opinion as unable of living without masculine help, excluded by the ignorance of her mind from public council, the woman progressively gets out of the hole where, for long centuries, God's wrath threw Eve. She is now ready to reach the summit where the man who despised her in her misery is. (translation is mine)

In the feminist ideology, a plea that comes first as stated above is that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men. In the same way, Emade, Alobwed'Epie's main character in *The Lady with a Beard*, has had some insight in this feminist ideology. As a matter of fact, Bakossi patriarchal society, using tradition, religious beliefs, taboos, stereotypes and other means to keep control over the woman would not expect for finding a feminine revolutionary figure in Bakossi society. For this reason, Alobwed' Epie's *The Lady with a Beard* as a basic text will help us to portray feminist inspiration and the female radical character through Emade, the heroine of this source novel.

Having realized that tradition is one of the elements that hamper women's assertiveness, Emade is presented as a tradition breaker, a woman out of common. Her courage and bravery are excessive. Though Bakossi society sets a line between what a man is and what a woman is; what are the restrictions imposed by gender, Emade has a contradictory vision. Indeed, when her step-sister Mechane dies, Emade regrets that Wobe, the only Mechane's daughter is married to an alien. In her song to their late father she reveals her conception of gender. She says: "But what're boulders made of women, who, also lone daughter beget? You made me the spokesperson' cause you saw the man in me" (36).

This reveals that Emade herself knows about her rude character. In addition, she knows that she represents a group of persons whose she is a speaker. She is a woman but she defends common interests whether males' or females'. In fact, she is not only a spokeswoman but also a spokesperson. Moreover, being a woman; she declares that her late father made her a spokesperson because he saw man in her. This again shows that Emade is convinced that gender is "performative". That is, a woman can be a man and vice-versa according to their achievements or performances. That's why she says, "When you get to a village where men shriek to call each other, you call such husks men?"(35).

If a man wants to be really called a man, he must prove his manhood and justify this reputation. In case he doesn't, it is not of his merit to be called a man. As J. Ross Eshleman in *The Family* says it, "...the ideal male is thus, hardworking, responsible, achieving and reliable" (13). According to Emade in *The Lady with a Beard*, Muabag men do not deserve the reputation of being called men since they are not responsible and reliable. In fact, Mechane used to entertain them with food and drinks. But when she got ill, none of them came to look after her in her lonely

house. She died abandoned. Then, Emade sees that to rely upon them is a loss of time. Besides this, when Mechane dies, all Muabag men are in the bush for hunting. There is no one to intervene in case of danger or attack. That is, they are not serious enough to protect their village. In addition, in case of a warned danger, they shriek to call each other.

Furthermore, Emade does not understand how in a village of men one can be drenched with dew in the morning with uncleared pathways and these men do not even realize that there is a stranger who comes in the village. She also adds that it is not understandable that a woman can play drums in the evening, in a village of men and the latter do not happen to know the identity of the drummer. Therefore, their vigilance is escapable. Then, all of these accusations deprive Muabag men of the reputation to be called men. Rather, a responsible and reliable woman can replace them in role. That's why she plays drums in their place though it announces the death of a woman, to show that a woman should also have both rights.

Generally speaking, in many societies, there exist some males who have been intoxicated by patriarchy. For these ones to have male sex is enough in that it gives power. They waste most of their time moving around instead of helping their wives in food production. This misconduct endangers the community in that poverty increases. Then, a man who willingly does not assume his responsibilities is not a man, nor can he be called a woman. Elizabeth fox-Genovèse in *Feminism without Illusions: A Critique of Individualism* shows how failure for some males is meaningless when they remember that they have a penis. She says:

> Early in our marriage we enjoyed playing gin rummy, and, as it happened, I frequently won. Now, my husband enjoys winning as much as anyone I know. And one day, when I had not just won, but won big he turned to me with a wicked gleam in his eye and said, "yes, but you don't have a penis". We had a good laugh. Having been thoroughly trounced, albeit in a game, he took the high ground of anatomical difference. However much I won, I was still a girl. (250)

Christina Nange, one of the characters in *The Lady with a Beard* has realized that Bakossi society needs a woman like Emade who can plead for other women. In fact, patriarchy has corrupted women's minds. Some of them have not yet noticed the bias of men's chauvinism and act against themselves. Still others, though they can realize it may feel shy to challenge it. Therefore, feminine group needs someone courageous enough and determined to change things on their names. Thus, as Nange sees how Emade is debunking male chauvinism, she praises her even though she feels uncourageous to join her. She says, "It is a woman like you that should be the stake of other women."(86). In this quotation Christina Nange shows a thirst for a women's liberation. However, she is caught between following tradition and breaking it as Assiba d'Almeida Irène states it in"The Concept of Choice in Mariama Bâ's *Une Si Longue Lettre"*. When she says: "Women want to change their position. They are in search for their freedom but the problem they face is to break tradition and at the same time follow the norms of tradition."(86)

Generally, common revolutionary figures do not wait for others to back them up. Once they realize injustice, their leadership obliges them to act in due time. They become initiators of a revolutionary movement. In this fight for freedom, it is

common to meet adversaries but they also make sure that supporters are there, because their ideas will necessarily arouse interest in others. Emade's revolutionary spirit is endowed with practical ideas and actions. In this process, she receives many admonitions from both male and female sides but she resists. In her resistance, she provides ideas and questions to which her opponents do not find answers. There are then instances where Emade calls the attention of the masses and pushes them to a line of thoughts. She asks: "If a woman digs a grave does she remain in it?... if a woman lays a corpse in the grave, does it jump out"(43).She adds "...should it always be men to lay stones? If a woman lays stones do they crumble?" (86) She goes farther to put a question challenging manhood. "...why do you always think that the best things must be done by men?*"(63).*

In all these questions, the point is that, Emade wants a logical explanation of things. Whereas other women are wrapped with traditional and religious beliefs, taboos and stereotypes, Emade is not there. Everything must be called into question and detect their veracity. As she sees the reality beyond these social restrictions, her challengers do not happen to answer these questions just because they themselves have no logical explanation. That's the reason why any illogical restriction must be removed. As a woman leader, Emade's intellect is sharp enough to move ahead in her quest for freedom.

Muabag people are amazed to see how Emade violates tradition since no woman in Bakossi society has ever dared to take the risk of wrath. However, Emade wants to reverse the picture that the woman has been given by patriarchy and impose a new one to her society. As a matter of fact, the place and consideration she has in this society no longer satisfy her as Beatrice in Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* reveals the existence of this reality. She says:

> "But the way I see it is that giving women today the same role which traditional society gave them of intervening only when everything else has failed is not enough, you know, like the women in the Sembène film who pick up the spears abandoned by their defeated men folk. It is not enough that women should be the court of last resort because the last resort is a damn sight too far and too late!"(91-92)

There are several instances where the woman plays a big role in helping or replacing valuably the man. Indeed, the fact that women are given a passive role is not a good example to imitate. For instance, in old days where hunting was more than frequent, women were left home due to their physical vulnerability. The resulting consequence is that they built a habit of being always fed by their husbands. However, there are other situations where women can help but are not given opportunity. This reflects some of the problems widows and their children have respectively after the death of husbands and fathers. Women who would have been trained in sustaining their families lose their views in course of a fugitive life. Some of them get involved in debauchery for they do not see how to survive. In this perspective, Alobwed'Epie presents us in *The Lady with a Beard* Emade who, after her husband's death has no problem about sustaining her family. Even Eduke, her neighbour comes frequently to beg for food. In this regard, we are shown this woman, Eduke, brandishing a husband but who sends her daughter Ebude to ask for food from Emade the widow: "My mother, eh, eh, sent me to to tell you that she has not for two days eaten, bi, bi, because she has no nothing to to eat with. That if you have have small alem you should send to her" (8). In this quotation, it is obvious that Emade, being a woman, is more than some of the men. She finances her family whereas other families where the husbands are alive can starve for days.

Though women are kept aside in some instances, they can be good councillors as it is not every man who is a good councillor. For example, Napoleon Hill in *Master Key to Riches: The Secret to Making Your Fortune* shows how history attributes the rise to military power of Napoléon Bonaparte to the inspirational influence of his first wife, Josephine. Napoléon's military successes began to wane when he allowed his ambition for power to cause him to put Josephine aside, and his defeat and banishment to the lonely island of St. Helena was not far behind this act.

Apart from her feminist inclination, Emade has a radical character. In fact, her behaviour proves that in her mind, she believes that important social changes are necessary in order to change Bakossi patriarchy society. Her determination is strong enough that any blame to her causes no change in terms of behaviour. Moreover, her confrontational attitude is one of the mechanisms she uses to defend herself; an attitude that reveals her intrepidity. Expressions like: "who is squirting bad breath here" (44) are provocative.

Generally, in the quest for freedom, one takes a determination. In case one is determined to an action, the conviction puts them in a situation where a backward movement is judged dishonourable. Thus, Emade is one of those who stand for their determination. She states, "If the stem and the bunch agree where to incline they will withstand not only storms but also gales" (27)

A realistic analysis shows that Emade is aware of threats and problems she can face in her quest for rights. In addition, as her choice has been that of changing the status quo of things, she also knows that Bakossi patriarchal society will be rude against her. However, she decides to face any situation however hard, chaotic or catastrophic it may be. Her impudence is not an attempt to overpower men, rather

she wants to regain mutual happiness and harmony in Bakossi society as Jocelyne Habonimana posits it in " The Changing Role of the African woman: A study of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Ngugiwa Thiong' o's *Petals of Blood* and Flora Nwapa's *Idu.*" She says: "The African woman's quest for self-discovery and self-realization through the changing role is viewed not as a struggle to overpower the man but to regain mutual happiness and harmony in society" (17).

With this harmony, the myth of female inferiority will no longer be a point to reckon with. Then, it is difficult to think seriously about women without also thinking seriously about men and vice- versa. They interrelate in many cases. In truth, nowadays, many women want to make a decent living, to have a rewarding personal life and to get on in a world without having too many problems. They no longer dream of being men's slaves.

Though Emade is seen as a woman having grown a beard, she is not eager of becoming a man and substitute men. She simply claims for her identity as a woman of dignity, a woman who is free and not limited in her ways of life by tradition, taboos and stereotypes. To this, Alobwed'Epie in *The Lady with a Beard* shows Emade addressing her daughter Ntube in a naming ceremony of Ahone's daughter's child. Through this, she reveals that her quest for freedom and assertiveness is far from being a thirst of becoming a man. She says:

> Child, when we named you, we placed you on the road as a sign that you belonged to the world. We put you on the eaves of a hut to show that you were a woman and belonged to the kitchen. Don't ever claim to be a man. (78).

From this, we realize that Emade is aware of the relation between biological characteristics and social roles. Though a man can also cook meals, she knows that there are some activities that fall into the responsibility of a woman according to social conventions. In the same perceptive, we know that there are some tasks socially known to belong to women and which tend to value the latter in the eyes of reasonable men. In this way, men are happy when they realize that they have someone as a helper that can take care of their house and organize house life whether in their absence of presence. However, these differences in roles should not denote inferiority or superiority of either gender. Rather, they should highlight complementation between sexes. In the same way, men have tasks that are socially known to be in their attributions and which value them in the eyes of the women as achieving human-beings as Elisabeth Fox-Genovèse precises it in *Feminism without Illusions.*

> In general, men's greater size and especially upper-body strength have fitted them better for certain kinds of heavy labour and armed combat and have certainly given them the advantage in direct physical competition with women. (250)

In the case a man rejects his responsibility, he is to blame. But we observe that in real life, there is a mixture of roles according to one's preferences and capability. When the African woman claims for mutual happiness and a legal treatment, collaboration framework between sexes and more precisely between wife and husband becomes a sensible point not to discard from social harmony. In fact, actually, there are innumerable cases of lamentations mainly in rural families where the woman suffers a lot from man's irrationality. Really, there are some husbands who never help their wives in any activity whatsoever, but who are the

first to benefit by force from their wives' lonely income. By the time she claims for justice, she is severely beaten. This kind of thanking them for their everyday labour is a terrible situation. Then some of the men need to rethink seriously of the relationship between their manhood and their responsibilities.

Alobwed'Epie, through *The Lady with a Beard* shows that Emade's feminist inclination is coupled with her intransigent character. As a matter of fact, her stubbornness allows her to reject any piece of advice she is given on the one hand. On the other hand, this intransigence has been beneficial in that it allows her to put a step forward in achieving her plan. In fact, in her trespass against traditional values, men and women try to stop her but she refuses. Her sister Ahone advises her to appease the conflict she has with Atieg women but at Ahone's surprise she answers: "I prefer to remain alone than have friends who hold me by the neck". (93)

In all of this, Emade refuses thinking that any sign of appeasement would be interpreted as capitulation to Eduke, her main woman challenger in the village. Instead, she accepts to suffer from a ban from both men and women. In her quest for women's assertiveness and freedom, she acts alone. Other women are afraid and still others do not see the importance of it. In this way, they think that Emade will capitulate when they say: "A deep- rooted mushroom loses it crown. No matter how powerful a person is, a combined force, concerted action always succeeds in undoing her, so let us take a united stand and watch"(18).

This united stand consists of ostracizing Emade. Instead of taking this united stand to claim for their rights, they take it to fight against their colleague. However Emade resists because she wants a self-definition. As Fergusan says it in *Image of Woman in Literature*, "women who accept society's definition of them have no

self-definition as individuals. They have nothing to withstand the strength of the stereotypes molding." (29).Women in patriarchal societies have got a false impression that in the absence of a male, a woman is incomplete and can't survive as Gerder Lerner stresses it in *The Creation of Patriarchy* when he says:" there had never been any woman or group of women who had lived without male protection, as far as most women knew"(219).

Emade does not apprehend it in the same way. In this regard, she shares Beatrice's opinion in Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* who says: "That every woman wants a man to complete her is a piece of male chauvinist bullshit I completely rejected before I knew there was anything like women's lib"(88). Besides this, the way Emade is treated in the society is mixed with a kind of exploitation of her widowhood. In fact, being in a false impression of this woman's incompleteness due to the lack or loss of husband, the male world is eager to exploit her as Hunze, another character in *The Lady with a Beard* says it: "We all know what happens with men and new widows."(18).In this, it becomes clear that a new widow, if not courageous is likely to be terrorized for exploitation.

Emade also knows that the two groups she is facing one is weak the other is relatively strong. Hence, in what she does, she bears to mind that once she defeats the stronger group, there is no use bothering about the weaker one. She also remembers that she has had problems with men but she resisted. This time, instead of helping her in the quest for women's emancipation, other women are deciding to ostracize her from other groups of women. However, the hope for a new success grows in her. She stipulates, "this time, it's not the men. It is the women. When male-rain fell on me I didn't wear raincoat. Now, it is female-rain, shall I bother myself? "(26). In this quotation, we realize that though Emade trusts herself, she

recognizes that women are generally weak. However, they can change their position from weakness to strength.

Alobwed'Epie's character, Emade, is out of common. She rises from a dominated group but resists more than expected. She is really charismatic. Her courage and bravery are out of common. Furthermore, Emade has an exceptional personality. In fact, Bakossi women have been psychologically conquered by the masculine world. They feel respect for men and not only this but also fear them. However, Emade displays a scornful appreciation for these men. She tells Ahone her sister and other women who are afraid of what she has been so far doing, things that violate both tradition and men's prerogative: "You are at it again, afraid of your so-called men. What do you think they can do to me? I borrowed nothing from them and I shall repay nothing" (72).

Emade is not happy with Bakossi women that have become inalienable slaves of men. She does everything to open their eyes but they do not understand in order to take revolt against patriarchal chauvinism. In her performing actions that violate tradition and men's prerogatives, women are present. In addition, when men verbally attack her, she defends herself victoriously in the presence of women. Then, she does not understand the reason why these women remain possessed.

Since the beginning of Emade's widowhood, she has been trying to develop in her a defensive attitude. As she herself says it, with the death of her husband, Atieg men thought she would be an elephant killed at cross-roads. They were expecting to exploit her as they usually do it, especially to widows. In fact, when Emade's husband died, her daughter Ntube was just four months old. The chief and councillors of the village wanted to move her to the village centre for two reasons:

First, they said it was inappropriate for a widow with a baby to be isolated from the rest of village. Second, they said that in a village where men incarnated Muankum a woman could not occupy the first compound, the entrance to the village. All the girls born and married there know that it was in the grove behind Emade's late husband's house that Muankum was incarnated for the building of the hammock. However, Emade refused categorically to move. Lombe, a character in Alobwed'Epie's *The Lady with Beard* summaries the situation in the following passage:

> Whenever she was invited in the council she mesmerized the Councillors. This went on until the village succumbed to her and moved the grove to where it is now behind the chief's compound. So, Nye Emade is a boulder we can't take for granted. (18)

In this, one can guess that Emade is intelligent enough to handle serious matters. In fact, in trying to move her from the entrance of the centre, she had already seen the reality beyond. First, if she moved, this action would perpetuate the idea that a woman can't occupy the first compound at the entrance to the village. Second, if she moved because she is isolated from the rest of the village being a woman, it would confirm fear and vulnerability of any woman, showing that every woman needs a permanent protection from man; a sign of superiority. Third, as Muankum incarnated in the grove behind Emade's husband's house for the building of the hammock; to move her was a strategy to prevent her from beating the drum inviting people to the repairment of the hammock. This would be a challenge to Atieg men's prerogatives. That is why her intellect advises her to refuse moving from there. Her resistance has pushed the whole village to succumb to her decision. Emade's attitude shows that she acts with much intelligence. Contrary to patriarchal claim that women are stupid, she appears brilliant. She has much in

common with Beatrice in Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah.* In fact, during pre-colonial and colonial period, experience has shown that the alleged women's inborn stupidity is a falsehood. Some women like Beatrice in Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* have proved themselves very performant. In fact, Beatrice is recognized by his Excellency president of Kangan as a very intelligent girl who outfits even English people. He says this to Lou, an American journalist on a visit to Kangan.

> Lou, this is one of the most brilliant daughters of this country, Beatrice Okoh. She is Senior Assistant Secretary in the Ministry of Finance-the only person in the service, male or female, with a first-class honours in English. And not from a local university but from Queen Mary college, University of London. Our Beatrice beat the English to their game. We're very proud of her (75)

Then, if we confront attributes patriarchy assigns to men to justify their manhood and those given to women to justify their inherent inferiority, it becomes obvious that gender would appear "performative". In fact, Alobwed'Epie's character Emade in *The Lady with a Beard,* is able to handle serious matters until when she challenges Muabang manhood, putting them at logger-heads by her intelligence. Even the Bakossi society recognizes that Emade is not an empty woman. They say:

> (...) if we are tackling Nye Emade's problem, we should be deep-rooted. Nye Emade is not an empty woman. She is full to the brim. As I am here before you, I am as empty as a broken jar. She who wants to fight a tiger must have claws and fangs. (17)

From this situation therefore, Emade can be called a man. However, when defeated by her intellect and performance, Bakossi men call her not a complete man but 'a male woman'. This tends to connote her negatively in that she is known to have lost women's attributes. There are other instances that can reveal that gender (a cultural meaning of sex) is "performative". As a matter of fact, in the case of lesbianism and homosexuality, one assumes the role of either man or woman. Okot Mark Benge in "Gender Representation in Acoli Oral Poetry" Adds much light to this when he says: "we note that an impotent male in the Acoli society is equated with a female, and branded by the females as a fellow woman" (81). In this quotation, we realize that a man who does not have sexual potency is likened to a woman. This shows again that patriarchy takes gender as a cultural meaning of sex. It must achieve its role. In case it does not, it becomes a false one. Then, gender is "performative".

Briefly, in this chapter, we set off to examine how feminism and the female radical character are reflected in Alobwed'Epie's *The Lady with a Beard* through Emade, the heroine. In the light of it, we have found that, notwithstanding the ideology propounded by patriarchal society, the African woman is gaining consciousness and therefore, tries to redefine herself. In her fight, Emade rebukes time-honoured stereotypes, traditional and religious beliefs, taboos, and so on and so forth. Through her confrontational language and intransigent character, she argues that irresponsible men should not be called men but husks; and that they ought to be replaced in their roles. Whereas other women are afraid of challenging manhood and beg her to stop it, she gives them courage to unravel the myth of men's superiority. However, she advises women not to claim for becoming men and stresses that biological characteristics and social roles must be put in relation, roles that do not emphasize the superiority or inferiority of either sex. It is also notable

that, in this fight for freedom and equal rights, women are divided simply because some of them haven't yet gained consciousness of patriarchal bias. However, those, who are aware of it represented here by Emade are ready to go forward in order to prove that gender is "performative", and that men and women should enjoy equal rights and opportunities. That is why men feel attacked and try to set back the woman as we are going to see it in the following chapter.

# CHAPTER III: THE WAY TO LIBERATION

This chapter examines strategies or attitudes developed by men in order to set back women's emancipation and the efforts made by the latter to break through. Emade, the heritage of Bakossi society will be a symbolic character. In this perspective, she wages a war against patriarchy. Despite her great achievements that impress both men and women, she suffers a ban and isolation from both sides. The chapter then displays her efforts to overcome by debunking publicly male chauvinism and the counterattack launched by patriarchy in moral assistance with other women. It also develops future perspectives, a way to liberation and the authorial vision.

Any system whether social or political, has its own lifespan. In fact, the African woman has been harassed by patriarchy for a long time. She is now determined to break through barriers and overcome silence in order to improve her social consideration. However, in her fight for freedom, equal right and opportunities, the road is not clear. The masculine world is reluctant to set her free. On this projection, Emade the heroine of Alobwed'Epie's *The Lady with a Beard*, a character standing for the feminist world, will help us to highlight the issue.

Emade's conduct in a purely patriarchal society would undoubtedly appear intolerable. In fact, being a widow outside patriarchal control, she does whatever she wants in that she is independent. As Mary Daly in *Gyn/Ecology of Metaethics of Radical Feminism* says it, patriarchy has no other solution than ostracizing such a woman. She states:

> Strong and independent women have always been ostracised by patriarchy. This is because these are independent women outside patriarchal control, therefore; spinsters and widows whose crime is independence have always been intolerable. (85)

Emade's crime is her independence in Bakossi society. She wants to be free and she has decided to get rid of patriarchal dictates. Therefore, she becomes marginalized and suffers from a ban. In fact, any new occurrence in the structure of a society is likely to cause problems especially a certain kind of misunderstanding. However, whether people want it or not, there are some events of which courses are impossible to annihilate. But, as people remain helpless vis-à-vis these events, they finish by accommodating themselves. Thus, though Bakossi people stand firm against Emade the heroine of Alobwed'Epie's *The Lady with a Beard*, her resolution to overcome silence is strong enough that to stop feminism would appear utopian as Léon Abensour *in Histoire générale du féminisme des origines à nos jours"* precises it:

> Mais que nous considérions le mouvement féministe dans son principe ou dans ses résultats comme heureux ou néfastes, nous ne saurions arrêter le cours des choses, ni la grande révolution qui, peu à peu s'accomplit. (326)

> But, whether we consider feminist movement in its essence or in its results as good or bad, we will not be able to stop it, or to avoid the great revolution which, step by step, is taking place. (Translation is mine)

In a society where existing problems whether social, political or economic set people in division, the resolution of these conflicts involves tackling real sources of them. Then, in what Emade has been doing in the opposition of patriarchy two actions are worth noting. That is: beating drums and digging graves. These actions have been taken as an open provocation led with regard to Atieg and Muabag manhood. Traditionally, a drum beater must be a man and one who has once incarnated Muankum, the deity of Bakossi tribe. In the same perspective, a woman, is not allowed to incarnate Muankum. This is exclusively a men's prerogative. In this way, when both men and women see Emade doing what the society judges unthinkable for a woman, they are petrified. To let her go on would appear as a man's emasculation process that begins.

However, Emade's digging of the grave relates to Muabag men's irresponsibility. In fact, they did not look after Mechane their neighbour when she was ill though she used to entertain them with food and drinks. Then turning to them in the occasion leading to Mechane's burial is to force them to do what they have rejected. The fact that they want Emade to let them dig the grave does not emanate from charity. Rather, they need food and drinks. Alobwed'Epie through *The Lady with a Beard* shows how Emade condemns their lack of care and tenderness for their neighbour Mechane at her agony. She says:

> Amue, your food is safe. Your drinks are safe. If you want more, Wobe will give. That has been your (Muabag people) relationship with her ever since she went gold-mining in a strange land for the Muabag community. (...) When Mechane was sick how many times did your mother visit her? What did

> you choose for her to eat? Now that you are at the service of your throat, you are choosing where she has to be buried. (46)

In her arguments, Emade puts forth irrefutable and verifiable facts. Thus men fall into a mouth-closing situation and have nothing to say except hanging their heads in shame. Therefore, men-group invents strategies to set her back.

First and foremost, Emade is given a sort of nicknames denoting her marginal character. These are: a tradition breaker, a breaker of boulder, a male woman and the-lady-with-a-beard. As a matter of fact, Emade's intrepidity is followed by a confrontational language. Muabag people beg her to stop digging a grave being a woman. Surprisingly, this grave is being dug in the middle of the courtyard, something strange in Bakossi society. However, instead of listening to them, Emade shows again their nothingness in that they did not look after Mechane though she used to entertain them with food and drinks.

Another mistake she accuses them is that they let Wobe, the lone daughter to Mechane be married to an Igbo man of Nigeria. Then, they have nothing to say since they have proved themselves worthless. She says: "Now, instead of hanging your heads in shame, you are choosing where her mother should be buried. (...) this is not a woman digging a grave this is a woman spitting in your faces" (46). According to Emade, it is a curse to these men, a curse from a woman in that they have abandoned their friend Mechane when she was ill until she died. Therefore, these men intervene only when it is about eating and drinking. To this condemnation, they feel vexed and attacked. However, as they are seized by the veracity of what Emade says, they have nothing to retort than nicknaming her.

They say, "No doubt people call you The-Lady-with-a-Beard. You have really grown a beard at Atieg" (46-47).

Alobwed'Epie's *The Lady with a Beard* and Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* have much in common as far as feminism and femininity are concerned. In fact, in both cases, though Emade is a rural and illiterate woman, she can be related to Beatrice. In the first novel, Emade refutes some aspects of tradition. In the second, Beatrice considers that some traditional considerations ought to be changed. She states:

> What does a man know about a child any way that he should presume to give it a name. So I think our tradition is faulty there. It is really safest to ask the mother what her child is or means or should be called. So Elewa should really be holding Ama and telling us what she is. What it was like to be loved by that beautiful man Ikem. But Elewa is too shy. Look at her! (222- 223)

From this quotation, tradition is put into question. As we already know, in patriarchal society, a child is named by its father as it inherits the latter and not its mother. However, Beatrice considers that it is unjust to let the father name a baby since he does not know about the sorrow of bearing a pregnancy. Therefore, tradition should be revamped in this regard. Besides this, as Emade in *The Lady with a Beard* encourages other women to overcome silence and act, Beatrice in *Anthills of the Savannah* advises Elewa to break fear and name her child instead of waiting for the baby's grandfather since Ikem, the father of Ama died before her birth.

Still, there is another instance where Emade can be put in relation with Beatrice. As a matter of fact, Emade is given several nicknames, among which, The-lady-with-a-beard. Beatrice also is given a nickname such as the latter-day-Madame-Pompadour. In both cases, these nicknames reflect a negative connotation. Then, we are presented Beatrice complaining in the following words:

> Pretentious journalists, hoping to catch the attention of the new military rulers created an image of me as" "The-latter-day Madame Pompadour who manipulated generals and patronized writers. (84)

Apart from strategies patriarchy uses to maintain the woman under control, giving speculative congratulations, false appraisals to a woman who observes strictly patriarchal dictates is common. In this way, this woman will feel encouraged in her subordination. However, in case a woman goes astray from these patriarchal principles, she is discouraged by giving her connotative nicknames. In fact, in "The-Lady-with-a beard ", the beard has an additional meaning that goes beyond the proper one. In this situation, the beard means a male character. And when a woman is said to have grown a beard, this means that she is no longer a woman. In other words, she has lost all the attributes of a woman and behaves in a man. Such a connotation is common in Burundian culture where a woman who goes out frequently for drinks and goes home late at night, a woman who does not respect or obey her husband is said "Umugoré w'íngăre" this means a woman who is out of men's control. As a consequence resulting from this, if this woman has daughters; young boys are reluctant to take them into marriage, because they think these girls can imitate their mother and behave in rebels against their husbands.

As Emade stipulates it, a widow is vulnerable. In fact, in a society where the woman has been effectively conquered, a widow becomes a target to any exploiter. With the death of her husband, Atieg people thought that Emade would be exploited as they want but she refuses. Then, the nicknames she is given intend to demoralize her so that she can surrender and stop challenging manhood forever. She says it in the following words:

> The people of my village thought that with the death of my husband, I shall become an elephant killed at the cross-roads. Because, I refuse to be one, they give me, all sorts of names-the most recent being "The-lady-With-a-beard". (116)

We know that cross-roads are a place where two roads from different places meet, therefore a place where many people meet frequently. An elephant killed at cross-roads could be eaten by everyone who passes since the message of its death is liable to arrive to many people. Then, if Emade becomes an elephant killed at cross-roads, she will be exploited by everybody who wants.

The second strategy that Bakossi men use in order to redress Emade has a religious implication. In fact, being unable to stop her from violating taboos, religious beliefs and stereotypes, these men think of incarnating Muankum the deity, against Emade. However, if they do so, they set a trap against themselves. As a matter of fact, Emade is a guest in Muabag. If they incarnate Muankum against her, she has no hut there in front of which Muankum will defecate. Muankum will go and defecate at the border between Atieg and Muabag for her to clean the faeces. Since women don't settle case on borders between villages, the case will move from her to her village, and it will become a two-village affair. In other words, they will be

broadening the matter. In addition, if her village accepts to clean the faeces by offering a cow, Emade would be the one to provide the cow. Her chief will simply present the cow at the border. In this way, she would be the one to eat the head of the cow. Consequently, if the following day she says that she has been initiated into the cult of settling border disputes, she will be right. Second, if she claims to have been initiated into the Muankum cult and that she has to participate in the incarnation rites of Muankum she will also be right. Then, to all these imminent problems, Sango Mesumbe, the old man advises them to reject the decision of incarnating Muankum against Emade in the following words:

> Is this how you will handle this village after my departure? A spear launched in anger misses its target. A woman violates our traditions, and in anger, we also violate the same traditions by incarnating Muankum? (50)

In this, we realize that Emade is a real challenger of manhood. She provoked men's anger to the extent that they act illogically and think of taking immature decisions; decisions that would allow their adversary, Emade, to win the game. As Munge says it, "Emade is not an empty woman."(50)

All the stratagems men have used to prevent Emade from emerging have been annihilated. In their failure, we locate a number of parameters that protrude Emade's successes. First, she has got a sharp mind in such a way that to locate incoherence in her planned actions would be utopian. In fact, Bakossi society knows that a grave is generally put behind the house of the deceased person. However, the grave Emade is digging is in the middle of the courtyard.

Even her sister Ahone does not understand it and begs her to stop digging. But in her explanation to Ahone, Emade convinces her perfectly. She says that since Wobe is married in Nigeria, she may never come back again. In this case, nothing will keep watch over the compound and grabbers of land. As she says, if they bury Mechane behind the compound, in less than five years those opposing burial in the courtyard will come and build in that strategic compound and own it by creating new genealogies and folktales. She continues to argue that if for anything sake the going gets rough with Wobe and that she decides to come back, she will not be able to dislodge the new owner of the compound. Then, burying Mechane in the middle of the courtyard, nobody will like to build on a non-relative's grave. So the grave in the middle of the courtyard is a sure guard of the compound. To this long explanation, Ahone is convinced and insists that she continues digging. However except Sango Mesumbe the wise and old man who sees the reason beyond, other men and women do not understand and take it as a foolish action. Mesumbe then gives them a related explanation: "Don't you see that by burying Mechane in the middle of the courtyard her sisters want to deter potential violators of their sister's land?"(51)

In this way, Emade is presented as a tactician, an experienced and imaginative woman. In her way of thinking, she embraces the wisdom of old men highly respected in the village. The second parameter of Emade's success is her natural virtues. In fact, Emade is a charismatic woman whose performance is out of common. Her achievements are so wonderful that Bakossi society does not understand what kind of woman she is. As a matter of fact, digging a grave is a collective task in charge of men only. However, she digs it alone and after the burial she stays alone at Muabag to blacken the grave. In the course of this action, she amazingly decorates the grave as Alobwed'Epie says it: "To their

consternation they saw the unthinkable being done by a woman. She had pegged out the grave with great craftsmanship and was digging it with the mastery of a professional" (44).

Muabag people are shocked because something unexpected happens. However, this consternation is mixed with admiration of Emade's craftsmanship. Hence, other women begin to call her "nine-women-put -together" (45). In addition to this, Emade's decision to blacken the grave of her sister has endeared her greatly to most people. In fact, she spent a month and ten days at Muabag being alone in full solitude in order to blacken Mechane's grave. In Bakossi tradition, to blacken a grave implies the growing of weeds on it. This gives Emade an additional mark of celebrity and attachment. Therefore, when she comes back to Atieg other women take her as a heroine. Alobwed'Epie says it: "Women took her for heroine. When she turned to Atieg, she received a heroine's welcome. The women forget about their dispute with her. For two days, they feasted with her."(9)

It is worth remembering that before her departure to Muabag, Emade had been ostracized by other women. Her sister Ahone came to take her for Muabag to alleviate her suffering from this ban. However, when she comes back, she is warmly welcomed as victorious of the fight for freedom and equal rights she has undertaken. Another determinant success of Emade comes from her dexterity in the art of beating drums. As mentioned earlier, beating drum had been one of the conflicts opposing Emade to Atieg people. Though, she is warned several times about this violation of taboos, she repeatedly plays the drum especially when comes the moment to invite people to the "repairment" of the hammock. In her view, she is not a simple woman like others since she guards village entrances. She argues: "Women who guard village entrances must not only understand but must

also know how to play the drum, not only the drum announcing death but also he drum announcing war."(35)

Emade is enthusiastic. As she is said to be nine-women-put-together, she is proud of it. In fact, she is the only woman in Bakossi society who keeps the entrance of the village. However, she has in her mind that many other women guard village entrances. That is, the revolution has begun. If she is the only one in Bakossi society, others exist elsewhere. In addition to this, if Ahone is afraid that Emade has played the drum announcing death she has to make sure that Emade can also announce war without any fear. Therefore, if men are angry with her, she is ready to resist any attack.

Emade is also proud of her dexterity in beating drums. As a matter of fact, during the first mourning night, men are very drunk and to animate the evening, Emade takes the drum and asks some boys to help her to drum. She plays so exquisitely well that the neighbouring villages vibrate with the rhythm. Most people dance in their sleep. Others wake up and listen to the music, but they are too tired to go and dance. Sango Mesumbe's bones creak as he rolls on his bed enjoying the music. He remembers the old days when great artists like Sango Ngole thrilled them and made them dance all night long.

The staccato rhythm penetrates even most deadened spirits by sleep. There is something mysterious about it. There is a near perfect fusion of ebenzu (a men's dance) all the night, making it difficult to people to identify the dance. The rhythm comes strong towards the morning. It comes vibrating with power and taking possession of the living and dead. People think that they hear the voices of their

departed ones in the cacophony of spirits dancing. Sango Mesumbe, the old man exclaims:

> Who is the drummer who is rending the quiet of the night with drum beats reminiscent of Sango Ngole? Has the Bakossi tribe ever had an artist of the calibre that is sending shock waves in me like this? And why did she prefer to make him play when there would be no dancers? (60)

As Emade doesn't want anybody to reveal that the drummer was a woman, at dawn, just when people are about getting up to move to the music arena, Emade entertains the drummers who helped her and makes them take an oath never to reveal the identity of the drummer. To be on the safe side, they return to their villages. In the morning, not only the people of Muabag enquire about the exquisite drummer but even those of neighbouring villages come to find out who the drummer is but in vain.

During ceremonies ending the mourning, people are impatient to see the famous drummer. No one knows him except the boys who helped Emade. However, when some of the men play the drums, instead of making them speak to the people, they chock them. Therefore, people are not happy and claim for the previous drummer whose identity they don't know. Emade in an isolated place criticizes them:

> They are choking the drums instead of making them speak to the people. The drum must talk. It must penetrate the nerves. It must possess the mind,... But, when instead of playing the drum they

> beat a tattoo they expect people to dance because the tattoo beaters are men. Mmen! (63)

According to Emade, to be a man is not the only condition to know things. Technicality does not imply sex or gender. It requires some training for the sake of mastery notwithstanding manhood or womanhood.

This people's claim for the famous drummer ensures Emade an irrefutable victory. In fact, people get chilly and finally the two boys who drummed with Emade reveal the identity of the exquisite drummer. Then, four elderly men get up and move toward Emade. They beg her to come in order to satisfy the people. After a long moment of reluctance, Emade accepts to play the drum under the following conditions:

> Suppose it is a woman who played the drum, will they allow her play it in the day as she played in the night? Suppose before she plays she demands that she be initiated into the cults of digging graves, incarnated Muankum, settling disputes at the borders of villages and so on, will they accept?(66)

To all these conditions, they all answer "Yes, even that" (68). Then Emade takes the lead drum and presently the compound vibrates with sweet powerful music as if some witchery were implanted into the drums. Even other women who had been so long reluctant to support Emade proclaim publicly her victory. They ululate: "nso nso. O nso nso o'... If hens crow instead of cocks the day will still break, O" (68)

The content of Emade's recommendations to elderly men just reflects what Emade has been claiming for, since the beginning. She is now promised to do what Bakossi society considered before as a trespass against traditional values especially when performed by a woman. Moreover, other women have seen that Emade has shown more performance in playing drums than men. Therefore, they are happy to see a woman leading men. The mask is unravelled and they proclaim Emade's victory which becomes their own. In concrete words men can listen to a woman speaking.

The preceding developed notions highlight how Emade challenges Muabag and Atieg manhood to the extent that other women admire her. She has defeated men as Esung, a female character says it in *The Lady with a Beard.* She stipulates "The men took a united front but failed" (18). Despite this, Emade's decline is provoked by her fellow females who have not until now understood the essence of feminism through her character. Many instances show it.

In fact, Emade's miraculous performances have not so far taught other women any lesson. Their minds have not received the message of Emade's behaviour and actions. That is the reason why they act against themselves without knowing it. In this regard, Eduke (Emade's main rival) convenes a meeting for women intended to ostracise Emade from all the groups of women. She argues "This is not the first time nor do I think it will be the last if we don't strike now ... so I call you to take action" (17). And one of the other women, Esung answers:

> A deep rooted mushroom loses its crown. No matter how powerful a person is, a combined force, concerted action always succeeds in undoing her. So let us take a united stand and watch. The men took a

> united front but failed. We shall also fail because all that we are discussing now will sooner or later be carried to her by a traitor. And as a master craftswoman she will devise manoeuvring strategies. That is what broke the men's resolve and not her deep rootedness. (18)

The remark above ends deliberations and the women of Atieg resolve to ostracise Emade from all women groups and activities until she apologizes and pays a heavy fine. The decision is to be communicated to all women. That is, those who have gone to church and those who have gone to the farms. Then the two quotations above show that many women act illogically without knowing why they do so. They think that Emade is impudent whereas she is claiming for a common interest to all women. That is, the woman's freedom, assertiveness and social consideration in the society.

Though they do not understand her, Emade tries to show them that they should help her in this fight for equal rights and equal opportunities since what happens to her can also befall any of them. She says:

> Sometimes, the road becomes more slippery for some feet than for others. But let us not forget, people on hilltops should avoid wetting the road. They may think the cry downhill is for somebody else but it may turn out to be theirs. Today it is mine, the next day it may be somebody else's. (101)

In this quotation, Emade wants other women to know that they have a common enemy. That is patriarchy and its bias. According to her, this fight for liberation ought to be common. However, they do not understand it. This illustrates at a high degree what happens in many families. A husband can ill-treat and even torture his

wife, but instead of intervening in the claim for her rights, other women remain silent and in many cases they criticize her arguing that she has grown a beard. However, the reality shows that even those who laugh at her find themselves another day confronted by the same situation. Then, they should defend one another. With this situation of being hunted by both men and women, Emade feels downcast and she begins to fear about her survival. She then begins to think of how she can protect herself and her daughter Ntube. She resolves to consult a soothsayer as the following passage shows it.

> My village people have put me on their horns. The men and the women don't want me to sleep. Wherever they see me put my foot, they set a trap. For years now, I have failed their attempts to destroy me. But this time, it seems to me that they are catching up with me. That is why I have come that you who is endowed with powers of divination should tell me what is lying ahead of me. It is when a person is absent-minded that she develops a saponaceous face (107-108)

From this quotation, we realize that Emade is lost and wrapped with fear. She expects to survive only by means of witchcraft. It is worth mentioning that before this idea of consulting soothsayers, she had decided to take her daughter Ntube to Mrs George at Basseng Mission in order to hide her there as a refuge. "A cockroach is a cockroach, and even one with a mane should take refuge under a cardboard if it expects to see another day" (104) she says while handing Ntube to Mrs George. This shows her fear and how she consoles herself with regard to her ordinary intrepidity now being challenged. This decision of taking Ntube to Mrs George for refuge surprises Ahone, Emade's sister as she sees her succumb to the

dictates of the situation. She could not believe that her iron-sister, the-spoon-that-stirs-steaming broth, could capitulate that easily. A premonitory chilly sensation runs through her spine.

Though Emade believes to have figured out a solution to the welfare of her daughter, Ntube's stay at the Mission causes Emade to think that her enemies will say that the mushroom has lost its crown. In other words, her decision to seek refuge for Ntube will tantamount to confirming Ahone's claim that a woman's urine never crosses a beam. What about the people who nickname her The-lady-with-a-beard? What will they say when they hear that she has begun crumbling like a poorly baked clay pot. With all these questions, she then decides to take Ntube back home in order to avoid being unmasked. On her way to Basseng Mission, she stubs her foot of ill-omen, a happen that causes her to sink into more worries than before.

From that moment, Emade begins regretting what she has done. In fact, on her way to consulting a soothsayer, she meets a palm wine tapper. When she tells him about her problems and her given nickname, this man asks her about the reaction to it. She then answers: "How else could I have reacted. Can a monkey say its tail is too heavy for it to carry? Can one conceal a wound on the forehead?" (116)

From this quotation, we notice that Emade has regret. That is, if it were possible to repair the crime she committed she would do it in order to have peace since all the three years she has spent consulting soothsayers, the message has been the same:

> What! You are hunting a lion in its den. You do not only have a beard. You have other things. I don't like that name. Go home

> and appease your people. Chest-striking invites the muzzle of a gun. Do not be the crab that is killed with its spincers? Act fast (116). Your divination has been done by the palm wine tapper. Go and do what he asked you to do, and stop holding the world by the neck. (117)

From the above excerpts, we remark that everyone accuses Emade of her impudence. She is asked to repair her mistakes. As a consequence, she decides never to consult any soothsayer, whether male or female. Then, she seeks refuge to superstition. In fact, returning empty handed in a foul mood, she plods on until she gets to where she had stubbed her foot-the origin of her demise. She casts a perfidious gaze at the place, spits and passes.

When she gets home though very late, she gets holy water and goes back. She digs out the stone against which she has stubbed her foot and washes both feet on it with the holy water saying "Holy water, cleanse the ill-omen that trails me. Leave it here for those who are pursuing me to pick. Let those who throw stones at the innocent lizard be hit by the stones" (117-118). Then, she bends down, gets some soil from the place and throws it behind over her head as she moves away to her house. As she gets close to her house, she feels as if she had stubbed the foot of good-omen. A wonderful sensation of joy overwhelms her. She suppresses ululating aloud but does it in her heart. Then she congratulates herself for the success of the ritual. That eases her up and for the first time after two years nine months, she goes to bed and sleeps soundly.

The next morning, she hears Eduke (her main rival) and two other women going to church. They would be the first women to cross the place of the cleansing of the

feet. She says: "This is not a coincidence. This is the wrath of God in action. My enemies are now going to carry my misfortunes. She who organized the hunting expedition shall now be hunted". (118). At that moment, Emade begins to pray to see as soon as possible the first signs that Eduke has picked misfortunes from the place of the cleansing of the feet. She expects Eduke to start having fits that would be a prelude to full-fledged epilepsy or one of those dreaded diseases. While she is distracted by this, Ntube remains in the mission, growing like a reed in the early rains of the year. That is the whole scenario of Alobwed'Epie's heroine, Emade. In the course of events, she has ascended and in the end she declines and suffers isolation.

So far as we have been analysing the flow of events along the novel, we would like now to embark on the author's message through the novel; future perspectives and a way to liberation. Through his novel *The Lady with a Beard*, Alobwed'Epie strives to promote an open society where lives in the community are open to scrutiny and thus intends to lead towards transparency to the service of the community. He enables us to laugh at ourselves with a view to improve. In fact, he presents the weaknesses of both men and women and wants genders to reconcile. In this regard, he highlights the suffering of a woman in a patriarchal society with a view to alleviate her pain.

In his message, he advises both men and women through the performance of well-chosen characters. On the side of males, Alobwed'Epie wants them to understand that a woman is a person like any other who needs freedom and equal rights. He shows that intelligence and rationality are not sexual contrary to patriarchal claims of female's inborn stupidity. He wants us to know that women are not reputed because they are not given opportunity to show their potentials and gain their

reputation. Thus, as they are masters of household chores, once they are given the opportunity to act, they prove themselves more performant. To highlight this issue, he presents Emade doing better in both activities that fall into prerogatives of women and those of men. He states:

> Ntube admired her mother peel cocoyams with the dexterity of a machine. Although her hands were dirty, she peeled the cocoyams clean and threw them into the pot on the fire with a near perfect regularity... Ntube wondered why dirty hands peeled cocoyams clean. (5)

Emade here peels cocoyams using a pahnechim, that is a knife different from the ordinary one which Ntube fails to use. However, her mother succeeds without any problem. This shows that a woman is achieving and responsible in what she does.

Alobwed'Epie goes ahead to show us that the woman's dexterity is not only limited to home affairs. He then presents Emade performing male activities with a great craftsmanship. He says: "To their consternation, they saw the unthinkable being done by a woman. She had pegged out the grave with great craftsmanship and was digging it with the mastery of a professional" (44). From those two quotations above, we realize that the woman's role is illimitable. The fact that she is excluded from some activities does not derive from her incapacity but from male chauvinism. In showing this, Alobwede wants us to unravel gender myths, stereotypes and taboos.

Through Mboke, another character, Alobwed'Epie probably wants men to understand that a woman is not a rebellious person. She only claims for her

assertiveness and equal rights. In fact, Alobwed'Epie shows that by the time Emade's husband was still alive, no quarrel was between the couple. He says it through Mboke, one of the characters. She posits:

> I hate people who bite the truth. Is she right or not that we have blown Ntube's incident out of proportion? Nye Emade has been a widow for twelve years. Can any young woman here say that (in spite of her compound being isolated) she has contested her husband with her? (19)

From this citation, apart from the woman's claim for assertiveness mentioned above, we also realize that Alobwed'Epie wants to suggest that the problem most women have is patriarchy. As a matter of fact, to see that Emade asserts herself here by the time that she is a widow means that she could not raise up her head when her husband was still alive. However as she is now out of patriarchal control, she can dare to speak. Again, this intends to show that the family sphere in patriarchy is a prison for a woman.

Through the character of Emade, the author possibly wants men to understand that gender is "performative". In fact, sex only does not imply power as many men can think. If it implies power, any person who claims for manhood as a sign of power should be achieving. Alobwede shows it through the following quotations: "But what are boulders made of women, who also lone daughter beget? You made me the spokesperson'cause you saw the man in me", (36) Says Emade. She goes ahead to say: "When you get to a village where men shriek to call each other, you call such husks men?"(35). Moreover, she argues: "Why are they in flight? Whenever I go, their families say they had travelled. Does that show male prowess? Are men

who shun their responsibilities worthy of the halo the prophetess was assigning them?" (111)

From these passages, the author suggests that the cultural meaning assigned to gender (= sex) should be "performative". That is, if male sex shows power, then any male ought to defend his manhood by assuming his responsibilities. In the same vein, a woman who is achieving and responsible can be referred to as a man as long as gender is still being connoted with power or weakness. Even in burundian culture, there is a proverb which says that « Ubugabo si urucúmu » (Manhood is not a spear), and the spear here stands for something under the navel, that is, a penis. Then, gender barriers should be removed.

As stated earlier, Alobwed'Epie's message is ambivalent. That is, he does not only advise men but also women. He shows here what they can achieve in order to open their way to liberation. First, the future of women lies in their conviction of being educated. In fact, Alobwede shows Emade's decision to take her daughter Ntube to Basseng Mission in order to receive intellectual education. In this perspective, his novel *The Lady with the Sting* that is sequel to *The Lady with a Beard* shows how Ntube, though a less charismatic heroine than her mother Emade destroys patriarchy. In this novel, Ntube takes profit of the opportunity the old erring patriarchal system offers her and she destroys it.

Through the intervention of Mboke and Emade, Alobwed'Epie advises women to improve their economic power in order to be independent. He sends the message through the following passages: "Can any woman here say that (though Nye Emade is a widow) she has cupped her hands before her supplicating for help? (19) Says Mboke to other women. And Emade says : "The Atieg women who cling to

her (Eduke) now will soon realize that an empty hand is of no good to the mouth (19), "Anye Nsum'are you begging beggars to eat that meat ? Does Eduke think I can look for shelter in storms like hers?" (24) and to Ahone she says: "you are at it again, afraid of your so-called men. What do you think they can do to me? I borrowed nothing from them and I shall repay nothing" (72).

The aforementioned quotations show how economic power ensures social power, decision making and thus assertiveness. As a matter of fact, Emade's ostracism from feminine groups and activities has been initiated by her main rival Eduke. This woman always begs from Emade. However, Emade has been tired of Eduke's begging to the extent that she complains. "Beggars like Eduke will make God punish innocent people" (10). And this has been the origin of their contention. Emade is a widow but Eduke has a husband, a situation that does not ensure her more economic security than Emade who acts alone economically in the family. Therefore, women should learn how to live without depending much on their husbands' income. This will ensure them freedom and assertiveness.

Alobwed'Epie also appeals to women to get united in their quest for emancipation. In fact along the process of debunking patriarchy, Emade has knocked men out. However, her lack of other females' support conducts her to a psychological problem. After the ban, she is downcast and suffers isolation to the extent that she reduces herself to a superstitious woman in order to feel at least released and a little moral comfort. However, Alobwed'Epie shows that women can achieve important things once they get united. He says it through one of his characters who says: " If she weren't nine women put together, she would have abandoned this village by now". (15) Ahone also repeats it when she says: "If you did that work alone, then you are nine women put together" (90). From these quotations,

Alobwed'Epie shows that women are a source of power and force. However, the problem is that they don't act collegiately and support one another. From this situation therefore, we deduce the evidence from our surrounding environment where many wives endure torture and ill-treatment in their families. But, short of it no one defends or speaks for them. Even other women can assist without any trial of ending the matter. If they come out of silence they say "Stop! That's enough". According to them, the woman's battering is a common occurrence. Sometimes, they ignore that the following day it can be their round as Emade stipulates it in the following words: "They may think the cry downhill is for somebody else, but it may turn out to be theirs. Today it is mine, the next day it may be somebody elses" (101)

Though we appeal to women to get united, we know that it is somehow difficult but possible. In fact, women get a serious problem when challenging patriarchy. This results from the fact that their adversaries are all oppressors, exploiters and lovers. Hence, they get trapped in the patriarchal web. They are then at cross-roads. In this way, we share the same view with Médiatrice Nizigiyimana in "Women's Self- Assertion in Alobwed'Epie's *The Lady with Beard"* when she says:

> The analogy between women and other oppressed groups is valid in that they live with and serve their oppressors. Divided, they can be ruled easily. The analogy breaks down because in general women love their oppressors (17).

In this extract, we realize that it is difficult for women to get united in their fight for freedom since they live with their husbands who do their best to stand for patriarchal principles. They entertain love relations to the extent that a woman who

is now loved forgets that the following day she can be hated and mistreated. This causes them not to act in defending other disfavoured women.

Apart from this, men are in most cases more aggressive and physically stronger than women. Then, a woman attempting to revolt against patriarchal web can be crushed if not assisted and saved from danger. This is the reason why any attempt to liberate the woman should as well involve men as women. If they happen to be moralized and realize that a woman is a person who needs liberty and assertiveness, the latter will be set free. That is, women's unity, solidarity for emancipation must be coupled with men's involvement in this matter.

In general, despite the problems encountered by Emade in her war for liberation, Alobwed'Epie portrays positively the image of the future African woman. In fact, Emade's achievements prove that the African woman has got consciousness of her being exploited by the male world. Thus, female pioneers like Emade are encouraged to go ahead and encourage their fellows. Christina Nange, one of Alobwed'Epie's characters says it to Emade : "It is a woman like you that should be the stake of other women". (86) This reveals that though some women like Emade miss a feminine help, their achievements change some of the women's minds. Then, the patriarchal world should realize that things change with time and be flexible. Women are now tired of their exploitation and dream for a future change in their exploitation and in their social consideration.

To conclude, the present chapter has examined what are the strategies or attitudes developed by men to set back women's emancipation through Emade, the main character. It further has checked the efforts that have been made by the latter to break through. The truth is that, being unable to stop Emade the heroine; men use

connotative nicknames such as a tradition breaker, a breaker of boulders, a male woman and the-lady- with-a-beard, to demoralize her but in vain. They also dream of incarnating Muankum the deity against her, a decision which proved itself in-adapted. Therefore, Emade challenges male chauvinism through her intellect, tactics and charisma which allow her to achieve two remarkable actions such as digging a grave with the mastery of a professional and drumming exquisitely well, actions that unravel the myth of men's superiority. In addition, it has been shown that Emade is not an unsociable woman with regard to men, rather, she claims for equal rights and opportunities. In the course of the chapter, we have shown how women act against themselves by ostracizing an illustrious woman who tries to defend their cause in common. The chapter also has examined the author's message and projection of the new African woman as seen through Emade, where Alobwed'Epie portrays the African woman as an evolving human-being who emerges from taboos and stereotypes to reality. Besides, alternative tools for liberation have been proposed.

# GENERAL CONCLUSION

This study has examined the issue of confronting feminism in Alobwed'Epie's *The Lady with a Beard.* The present study set out to validate hypothesis that Alobwed'Epie in *The Lady with a Beard* presents a radical woman who, in the attempt to exercise her rights, is confronted by forces of tradition. In fact, patriarchy obstructs the way to women's emancipation and it has set up tools like tradition, taboos, stereotypes, religious beliefs, etc to silence the woman. Thus, in case male chauvinism is challenged the patriarchal world reacts roughly to the woman by rejecting its responsibility in oppressing the latter under the pretext of protecting traditional values and mores.

Basing our study on Bakossi society, Alobwed'Epie has forged an extraordinary woman endowed with natural virtues (charisma and excessive prowess). This woman proved herself a male woman in debunking male chauvinism. In fact, Bakossi society is a patriarchal one. In this society, a woman is limited in her ways of life, in that she does not enjoy full rights like men. A woman is considered weak and therefore subordinated to a man. She is not allowed to take part in actions putting forward prowess such as fighting with gorillas at cross-roads. In addition, a woman is not allowed to beat drums, to settle disputes at the borders or to participate to the incarnation rite and other cults such as digging a grave. To emphasize the gap between men and women, emotional feelings are expressed differently according to genders. In fact, there exist songs exclusively reserved to men and others allowed to women. It is also notable that in this society, the death of a man is more valued than that of a woman, in that when a man dies, a drum announcing his death is beaten whereas the death of a woman is not announced by beating drums.

In general, the rite of incarnation which is a men's right, limits women is many activities that would put in evidence women's performances and achievements. However, wearing a coat of Emade, Alobwed'Epie shows that a woman is an evolving and achieving human-being. As a matter of fact, being in a situation of widowhood, Emade challenges Muabag and Atieg manhood through the breaking of tradition, taboos and stereotypes. In her fight for freedom and equal rights she suffers a ban from both men and women but she resists enough. Helplessly, the masculine world adopts strategies to set her back but in vain. These include connotative nicknames and the incarnation of Muankum the deity against her. Though she received many admonitions, she happened to perform two remarkable actions violating tradition and challenging Bakossi manhood. These are: digging a grave in the courtyard with extraordinary craftsmanship and beating drums exquisitely well under the permission of defeated men due to her dexterity out of the common. Putting forward irrefutable arguments and challenging questions backed with dexterous actions, she highly impresses the masses. Then, through her performance, she shows that gender is "performative".

Along the present study, we have found that in Bakossi society, gender imbalance is an efficient vehicle of male chauvinism. Using tradition, religious beliefs, taboos and stereotypes, this society hopes to ensure patriarchal enhancement. Our analysis has revealed that the woman is a reasonable and an evolving human being. Instead of taking an acquiescent position as she used to do, she now wants to take a position of resistance until when she enjoys equal rights and equal opportunities. In addition, it has been shown that the woman's fight for freedom is not a quest for manhood but equal treatment of genders and women's assertiveness. We also have found that some of the women haven't yet understood the raison-d'être of feminists' claiming for women's rights. In fact, they react negatively, and show

hostility to any woman that challenges male chauvinism. In this way, they act against themselves due to misconception of feminism and lack of solidarity in their quest for freedom and assertiveness.

Through *The Lady with a Beard*, Alobwed'Epie Charles sends a message to Africans of both genders. Men should know that a woman is a person like any other, who can enjoy full rights. They also have to acknowledge that a man is what he really is rather than what he thinks he is. In the same perspective, women are called to improve their social status, bearing to mind that they can enjoy equal rights and equal opportunities without totally rejecting the relation between biological characteristics and social roles. Education, economic power and solidarity constitute their gateway to liberation.

As far as, our contribution to literature is concerned, this work continues to debate the issue of gender imbalance in African patriarchal societies and its connected shortcomings. In fact, many writers have been concerned with feminism and gender roles. However, the social injustice that women continue to undergo requires joint and continuous efforts, more concern from both men and women in order to be eradicated.

Being aware of negative impacts generated by social problems related to gender imbalance, especially poverty and repetitive divorces, we would like to recommend the masculine world to alleviate the suffering of the woman and face jointly common dangers of life. In fact, if the woman is quiet, it is not a kind of ignorance and stupidity that wrap her. Rather, she is a reasonable person. Then, mutual consent and collaboration should be a sure guide of their relation and bear to mind that a woman is a person like others, in need of freedom, equal rights and

social consideration. To women, we recommend to stand for their rights without rejecting their social roles and responsibilities. Solidarity, education and economic potentials are key tools to their liberation. To the government, we recommend a sensitization programme that would moralize men in human rights especially those related to oppressed groups such as women. To the Civil Society, we recommend them to play a significant role in pleading for the rights of the woman through workshops and medias.

We would like then further researchers to anchor on Alobwed'Epie's *The Lady with the Sting* in order to establish a character delineation between Emade and her daughter Ntube in that the latter protrudes successfully the task initiated by her mother Emade in *The Lady with a Beard.*

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