
RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Portrayal of Gender in Kofi Nyaku's *Amedzro Etõlia*: A Feminist Approach

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ABSTRACT

Literature is usually reflective of the ideologies and general worldviews of the societies from which it originates. Among the critical issues that are raised in many literary works are issues pertaining to gender and power relations. Some literary works originating from the African context have served as fertile grounds for gender stereotyping and its attendant asymmetric power distribution. In spite of the abundance of such literary works, those written in colonial languages tend to receive more scholarly attention than those written in indigenous African languages. The present study is a feminist criticism of a masterpiece originating from the Ewe culture of Ghana and Togo and written in Ewe, a Kwa language spoken in parts of West Africa. The study explores the author's portrayal of gender and the extent to which his work reproduces asymmetric power relations based on gender. The analysis shows that the author reproduces gender stereotypes through the foregrounding of male characters, asymmetric distribution of wealth, gendered assignment of agency, and gendered assignment of occupations.

KEYWORDS

Gender, power, Ewe, Agency, Amedzro, women

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1. Introduction

Kofi Nyaku's *Amedzro Etõlia* is one of the few Ewe literary works that are still in circulation. Though fictional, the text not only paints a vivid picture of the Ewe society in the post-colonial era, but also raises problems that still persist in many Ghanaian societies. However, like other texts written in indigenous Ghanaian languages, *Amedzro Etõlia* has received limited scholarly attention. The present study explores the issue of gender, which remains a critical area of contention in Ghana and many African societies.

Gender and its attendant issues, such as the asymmetric distribution of power, opportunities, and resources, continue to inspire debates within the African context. The complexities of gender asymmetry, as presented in the lived experiences of Africans, are also vividly reflected in literary works originating from the African context. Before delving into how gender asymmetry has been reflected in the selected text, it is imperative to attempt an explanation of the social category of gender and its relation to biological sex.

Feminist theorizing inspired a distinction between sex and gender, so that sex is considered the classification of people into categories of male and female based on their biological features, while gender is considered the social elaboration of biological sex (Bucholtz, 2002; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013). It is essential to point out that while biological sex does not always map directly onto gender (Eckert, 1989), society typically builds gender roles and gendered expectations on the biological sexes of its members (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013). This explains why men and women are held to different social and cultural expectations for no other reason than their biological features. Against this backdrop, Butler (1990) asserts that gender is not a given. It is not something that a person is born with or possesses that determines their behavior. Instead, gender is performative, and day in and day out, individuals construct a variety of gender identities through repeated or ritualistic performances of various behaviors and roles.

In the traditional African context, however, while gender is still performative, social expectations are such that gender roles appear to be forced onto members based on their biological sexes, and strict adherence to such gender roles is expected. Traditionally, one's performance of gender is expected to correspond to one's biological sex, and the failure to do so may attract ridicule. In some literary works originating from the African context, these gender roles are mirrored through the depiction of characters and the roles the author assigns them. The present study is a feminist criticism of Kofi Nyaku's *Amedzro Etõlia*. The study explores how the author portrays gender through his treatment of gender stereotypes and his general attitude toward the female characters in the story.

1.1 Significance of the study

In addition to creating awareness of relevant issues of gender imbalance in the Ghanaian context, the present study also draws much-needed attention to texts written in indigenous African languages.

1.2 Research Objectives

The present study seeks to examine the portrayal of gender through an evaluation of the author's treatment of characters categorized as male and female in the text. It examines how the author designates power to the characters through their introduction and his assignment of wealth, occupation, and agency.

1.3 Research Questions

The objectives of the study are addressed by answering the following questions:

- a. What gender differences can be observed in how the author introduces the characters?
- b. What gender differences can be observed in how the author assigns wealth to the characters?
- c. How does the assignment of agency vary between male and female characters?
- d. What gender differences can be observed in the author's assignment of occupations to the characters?

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Feminist Theorizing

Feminism emerged as a response to the marginalization and misrepresentation of women and their experiences in patriarchal societies. Feminists hold the perception that gender is a social construct that is prescribed and perpetuated by men (Humm, 2004). They establish that women's problems in patriarchal societies are different and unequal to those of men because women are oppressed and, sometimes, at the receiving end of abuse and violence in such societies (Crossman, 2020). Feminism, thus, aims at centralizing the lived experiences of women by dispelling cultural ideologies and stereotypes used to perpetuate and sustain the marginalization, oppression, and exploitation of women.

Feminism, over the course of its existence, has occurred in three waves. The first wave of feminism was more prominent in the United States of America and focused on fighting for women's right to vote and removing the limitations on women's right to education and employment, among others (Guy-Evans, 2023). The second wave of feminism is more diverse in its perception of the causes of the marginalization of women. This led to the emergence of different feminist perspectives: radical, liberal, and Marxist feminism (Nutsukpo, 2020). Liberal feminists believe in the equality of both men and women and advocate for equal rights and equal access to opportunities through legislation (Nutsukpo, 2020; Guy-Evans, 2023).

Radical feminists push more of a gender separatist agenda with the belief that patriarchy is the primary cause of women's oppression and must be eradicated to allow women to assume positions of power and the liberation of the female (Crossman, 2020). Marxist feminists point out that the consequences of capitalism extend far beyond the exploitation of lower social classes. They argue that women are exploited by capitalism as cheap labor and the producers of the future workforce. Additionally, they perceive the family as a capitalist unit in which the woman is compelled to render domestic labor for free (Guy-Evans, 2023). Third-wave feminism focuses on intersectionality. It extends the concept of feminism to include other forms of oppression, including those based on race, social class, gender, sexuality, disability, and religion (Nutsukpo, 2020). Third-wave feminists emphasize personal agency and encourage women to challenge gender-biased norms

2.2 Feminism in the African Context

While African women are portrayed as docile and silent, there is historical evidence to the contrary that African women have constantly challenged various manifestations of patriarchy, ranging from political powers to husbands (Mohammed, 2022). Despite the efforts of women fighters, their roles appear to have been erased, except for a few whose names have been memorialized in textbooks and children's stories (Kuba, 2018, in Mohammed, 2022). Unsurprisingly, feminism did not receive a resounding welcome in traditional African societies (Nutsukpo, 2020). According to Ezeigbo (1996), the rejection of feminist ideologies in the traditional African context stems from a misunderstanding of the objectives of the feminist movement as aiming to replace men in society.

They argue that issues of male dominance and the plight of African women within the African context differ significantly from those of women in the West. African feminists, therefore, have proposed various forms of feminism that they perceive as more suitable for the African context. The black-centered feminist ideologies, including *womanism* (Ogunyemi, 1985), African feminism (Chukwuma, 1994), and accommodation (Nnolim, 1994), however, do not prioritize the only woman and her experiences in a male-dominated society. Instead, they seek to foster the heterosexual family-centered ideologies of African societies by advocating for the peaceful coexistence of men and women.

3. Methodology

The present study adopts a qualitative research design of document analysis. Qualitative researchers utilize diverse data sources, including interviews, observations, documents, and tangible artifacts, to gather evidence and corroborate findings. Document analysis is a systematic technique for assessing and evaluating documents, including printed and electronic information. It entails evaluating and interpreting facts to elicit meaning, gain insight, and generate empirical knowledge from documents such as documents, letters, and books, among others (Bowen, 2009). For this study, Kofi Nyaku's novel, *Amedzro Etɔlia*, is examined from a feminist perspective to identify and interpret gender related issues portrayed in the text.

4. Discussion and Analysis

4.1 The Introduction of Characters

One peculiar thing the reader may note about *Amedzro Etɔlia* is the author's introduction of the characters. Though, in a way, the author introduces all the characters, there is an imbalance in the author's comments on each of the characters he introduces, and the imbalance occurs along the lines of gender. The male characters are introduced with elaborate commentary, while the female characters appear to be squeezed between the men. From the beginning, when the first male character Gamaleyebia is introduced, he is presented as an affluent man who inherits his father's wealth and owns several vehicles, corn mills, and houses, including a well-known multi-storey building on the Anexɔ beach.

Excerpt 1

Dzifoɔɔ gāa aɔe le Anexɔ futa le afisi Gbagatɔsisi de nu atsiafu gbawo la me le. Afe sia tɔ ŋkɔe nye Gamaleyebia eye srɔ̃a ŋkɔe nye Nyoname. Gamaleyebia fofo, amesi woyɔna be Gasesɛ la nye hotsuitɔ gāa aɔe ŋutɔ. Esi woku la, efe ga, xɔwo, mɔ̃tewo, lriwo, kple nyiwo katã zu via Gamaleyebia tɔ.

There is a multi-storey building on the beach of Anexɔ where the Gbaga River meets the sea. The owner of this house is Gamaleyebia, and his wife is Nyoname. Gamaleyebia's father, Gasesɛ, was very wealthy. When he died, his money, buildings, corn mills, vehicles, and cattle went to his son Gamaleyebia.

A similarly attention-grabbing introduction is given to Amuzu, the protagonist. Though unpleasant, the circumstances surrounding his birth make him a character to expect. His mother's neglect of the pregnancy and the child that was later born, the distinct markings of his face, the deviation from the culture of early circumcision, and the peculiar names that the child Amuzu was given draw the reader's attention to him and cause the reader to look forward to the future of such an unloved child. One may even say that the description is so intense that it causes the reader to wish that the baby Amuzu thrives against all odds.

Excerpt 2

Amewo buna be ne vi kugbɔkugbɔe alo dzikuidzikuidzilawo gadzi ɔevi aɔe eye wome lɔe o, wome le be ne o, ke boɔ wodo vloɔ la, ɔevia fe nu madzɔ dzi na salagatsi wɔ̃ayi ekplɔ ge adzoe ayi kukuawode o. Ale wosi abɔgo na ɔevia fiafiafia eye wodze efe ŋgo kpiakpiakpia. Wote fli etɔ̃ tso dzi va anyi, bubu etɔ̃ tso ɔusime yi miame ɔe ɔevia fe ŋɔtita. Le esia megbe la, wona ŋkɔ ɔevi la be Kofi...wogatsɔ ŋkɔ ma ɔi ŋkɔ kple fewuɔŋkɔ geɔewo ne.

People believe that mothers who have suffered multiple neonatal deaths must not love any other child they might have. Instead, they must denigrate the child so that death will find him repulsive. So they marked his cheeks and forehead with long cuts. They made three vertical and three horizontal cuts across the child's nose. After this, they named him Kofi. They also gave him multiple derogatory names.

A third male, who is given a striking introduction, is Amemaxanu. He is introduced as a semi-literate driver's assistant, whose master dismisses him because his extremely quarrelsome nature drives away potential passengers. He then switches to sewing but is unable to maintain his customers because he uses their fabrics to sew clothes for himself. He turns to writing letters for people but consistently misleads and accuses people of wrongdoing in his letters. In the author's introduction of Amemaxanu's character, the author presents him as a menace that invokes fear among the people of *Gbɔdzɔekɔfe*. When Amemaxanu is seen again after

he retires from the military, he is introduced as marching around town in his military uniform, with a camera around his neck, and blowing a type of trumpet (*biglo*), which causes the entire town, including both humans and animals, to panic.

Many of the male characters are introduced similarly. The author's approach to introducing these male characters makes them very visible to the reader. This type of introduction also sustains the reader's interest in the specific character throughout the text so that they do not disappear from the reader.

However, this is not the case for the female characters. The female characters are introduced with very little or no emphasis at all. For instance, the first female character, Nyoname, Amuzu's mother, is simply introduced as the wife of Gamaleyebia, the wealthy man of Anexɔ. The mention of her name at the beginning of the text (quoted above as **Excerpt 1**) is followed by a description of Gamaleyebia's father, Gasesɛ's wealth. The way the writer puts her between two men of great wealth makes her easy to overlook. It appeared as though she is just shoved between the two men. The brevity of her introduction compared to how the male characters are introduced makes her invisible. This apparent invisibility of female characters in literary works written by male authors reinforces the social backgrounding and silencing of women in society.

Ekpatanyo is another female character whose introduction in the text suggests patriarchal domination and possession of the female body. As opposed to the introduction of the male characters, Ekpatanyo, is introduced as a commodity procured by a man for another man. The only description of Ekpatanyo that the author provides is that she is clean and diligent, to the point where even traditional believers admire her. The entire introduction of this character may be interpreted as a presentation of the woman as a commodity for male ownership and admiration. Ekpatanyo's introduction is quoted in **Excerpt 3** below.

Excerpt 3

Dowokpɔ va di ɖetugbi aɖe na Amuzu be woa ɖe eye Amuzu hã fle mɔ̃te na Dowokpɔ abe akpedada ne ene. ɖetugbi sia n̄kɔe nye Ekpatanyo. Ekpatanyo nye nyɔnuvi zazɛ, dzadzɛ, dze tugbe aɖe si nu trɔ̃subɔlawo kekeake gɔ̃ hã ɖi ɖase nyui le.

Dowokpɔ found a young lady for Amuzu to marry, and Amuzu bought him a corn mill to show his gratitude. The young lady is called Ekpatanyo. Ekpatanyo is a hardworking young woman whose beauty and hygiene are testified to even by traditionalists.

Another female character who is integral to the story but whose reveal may be almost unnoticeable is Lebene, Amuzu's wife. While she is Amuzu's wife, around whom most of his thoughts are centered throughout the story, her introduction is brief and carries no extra commentary except the fact that she is pleasing to men's eyes and is the type of woman any man would be blessed to have due to how well she takes care of Amuzu. This description of Lebene reinforces existing stereotypes that perceive the woman as existing to take care of the man in order to earn society's approval. **Excerpt 4** below shows the author's introduction of Lebene.

Excerpt 4

Mexɔ ɣeyiyi aɖeke hafi Amuzu ɖe ɖetugbi dzeameɲu aɖe o. ɖetugbi sia tso Anyako eye woyɔ ne be Lebene. Nyatefe, n̄tsu siwo kpɔ amenuveve eye wo srɔ̃wo lea be na wo abe alesi Lebene lea be na srɔ̃a Amuzu ene la, mesɔ gbɔ le Evenyigba blibo la dzi o.

Soon, Amuzu married a likable young woman named Lebene. This young woman comes from Anyako. In truth, there are fewer men on Euland whose wives care for them the way Lebene cares for Amuzu.

Finally, the introduction of Afisiafa, the only highly educated female character in the text, also appears to lack the power that characterized the introduction of the male characters. When she is first mentioned, she is merely a child who is cared for by her father, Amemaxanu. When she is reintroduced into the story, towards the end of her college education, one would assume that her academic achievements would be emphasized as a way of describing her. However, this is not the case. Her education, a feat many of the male characters cannot boast of, is relegated to the background, and the author only emphasizes how pleasing her physical features are to observers.

Excerpt 5

Vianyɔnu, Afisiafa zu ɔtugbi zazē aɔe si so fe aɔtame na. Kwasiɔa eve koe susɔne woawu efe sukudede nu le Atsyimɔta. Efe abgbɔnukoko wɔa dɔ ɔe nyɔnuwo kple nɔtsuwo siaa dzi abe alesi yedzedze nyui naa agbegbɔgbɔ atiwo kple lāwo siaa ene. Efe nufogbe di be yèaɔi hadzigbe eye efe gbedoname sɔ kple nyuidiname. Efe abɔnyenye dea zazā lāme na etefekpɔlawo eye efe aɔɔɔɔe doa dzidzɔ na mɔtonɔlawo.

His daughter, Afisiafa, has grown into a hardworking young woman who has a diastema. She will graduate from Achimota in just two weeks. Her smile affects both men and women, like how a burst of beautiful sunshine gives life to the trees and animals. Her voice is melodious, and her greetings are synonymous with well-wishes. The swinging of her arms gingers those who witness it, and her steps delight bystanders.

The author's gendered approach to introducing the characters in the story exemplifies the prevailing concerns in feminist literary criticism that some male authors relegate female characters to the background while giving prominence to male characters. This suppression of female characters is a reproduction of the marginalization and apparent invisibility of women in a patriarchal society.

4.2 Gendered Distribution of Wealth

There is also a gender imbalance in how wealth is distributed among the characters. Here, the male characters are those that the author entrusts with wealth, while the female characters own nothing. A few female characters are mentioned in the same line with wealth, but it is not because these female characters own anything. Instead, it is because they are married to wealthy male characters. Again, this reflects the general structuring of traditional African societies, especially the time setting of the story when the males owned wealth, and, though not all, most female members of society were only associated with wealth through marriage to wealthy men.

The first wealthy character the reader encounters is Amuzu's father, Gamaleyebia, who inherits his wealth from his father, Gasesē. Gamaleyebia's wife, Nyoname, is only associated with wealth by marriage. As the story unfolds, the reader finds that Amuzu, who inherits his father's wealth, also makes more money and becomes exceedingly rich, even beyond the imagination of the manager of the town's bank and his staff. However, his wife, Lebene, was only associated with wealth by marriage to him. Other male characters, including the bank manager, Mr Zonglopotɔs, and the chief of Anexɔ are all male characters who are seen handling money in the story. None of the female characters is presented as owning any property or money except Sokpoti's widow, Sesinyale, who inherits her late husband's farm but loses more than half the size of the land to Amuzu. It is worth pointing out that, though the widow owned the land, she only got it out of her husband's passing, and half of the land is immediately stolen from her by Amuzu, a male character.

The gendered distribution of wealth in the story reproduces the perception within traditional African societies that men are the ones who own property and who go out to work and earn a living. Women must be domesticated subordinates who are simply wives and, if fortunate, then wives of wealthy men. Though it may be argued that recent advocacy work by feminist groups has led to some adjustments to these perceptions, women are still marginalized in traditional African societies when it comes to property ownership.

4.3 Gendered Assignment of Agency

In addition to foregrounding male characters to the disadvantage of female characters and the unequal distribution of wealth across genders, the author also takes away women's agency. Adekunle & Mohammed (2022) define agency as a person's capability to act. Female agency in literary texts may, therefore, be said to be the capability of female characters to make decisions and take actions that shape their lives and the outcome of the text. From the text, it can be observed that while the male characters have agency and are able to make decisions that shape the trajectory and outcome of the text, not many such significant actions and decisions can be attributed to the female characters.

First, Dowokpɔ, a male character, decides and perpetuates a long-standing stereotype that brands women as promiscuous and capable of bringing illegitimate children into their marriages. Promiscuity on the part of men is overlooked and explained away as being part of culture and tradition. This may be why Amuzu, though not knowing the source of the anonymous letter in which his wife is accused of infidelity, goes ahead to physically assault and send her and their dying child away. This shows how easy it is for men to change the course of things. The woman, Lebene, on the other hand, does not have the capability to defend herself and reject punishment for a crime she knows nothing about.

Also, masculine agency can be seen at work when Amuzu, a male character, decides to fill the void created by the absence of his wife and son with the acquisition of wealth. Amuzu acts on his decision, and he reaps the profit of his agency by becoming

extremely wealthy. Though his wealth does not exactly fill the void, the author still gives him the capability to make life-changing decisions and put them into action. The same cannot be said of the female characters.

Also, the author's portrayal of Lebene and the Sesinyale reproduces the stereotype that women are incapable of making decisions that challenge societal expectations. For instance, when Amuzu confronts Lebene regarding her alleged promiscuity and the illegitimacy of her son, the author does not give Lebene the agency to deny the accusations or even refuse to be thrown out into the rain with their sick child. Instead, the author puts her at the receiving end of physical assault, something Fonchingong (2006) notes as the perceived repercussion for unorthodox behavior on the part of women in traditional African societies. In the end, Lebene is made to conform to the social expectation of living for years (25 years, in her case) without remarrying, and when she finally meets Amuzu again, she is remarried to him. Lebene, after all the wrongs perpetrated against her for a crime she is innocent of, slips back into her culturally assigned role as a wife without rebellion.

Sesinyale, another female character, is also portrayed as powerless by the author as she witnesses Amuzu cheat her out of half of her late husband's land. Her only reaction to Amuzu's behavior is the saying, "*kukuawo to ya deko wobuna de eme*" which translates to, "*The dead often lose what is theirs.*" The author does not give her the ability to call out Amuzu on his lies and save her late husband's land, which should rightfully go to her. Instead, she conforms to the stereotype that women possess high communal traits. She forgives him. Even her attempt at delivering her message of forgiveness is cut short by the chief's linguist, who chastises her for interrupting a man.

To continue, in the meeting of the chief with Amuzu and Sesinyale, the reader also encounters the general perception that women talk too much, something traditional African societies such as the one portrayed in the text consider a violation of their expectation that women must be quiet and docile, especially in the midst of men. Sesinyale is reprimanded for daring to speak among men when she was not asked to do so. The linguist reminds her to let the men finish speaking before she speaks. This is depicted in **Excerpt 6** below.

Excerpt 6

Tsiami la tso nya de enu be, "O, mi nyõnuwo vevietõ mi ahoõsiwo, miefoa nu akpa. Wõeyõ mi va afisia? Nya si Gbede Amuzu di be yèagblõ la me di go ha de o, gake èdõ enu gõ hã xoxo. Mi nyõnuwo mietrea dzodzo na uugã akpa. Tasiadãmenca sã ngã o."

The linguist cuts her short, saying, "Oh, you women, especially, you widows talk too much. Were you the one who invited us here? Amuzu the blacksmith has not even finished telling us why he called us here, but you have already answered. You women tend to jump the gun. Nobody puts the cart before the horse."

In the paragraph that followed, the reader encounters another situation in which men try to even control women's reactions, especially in moments of vulnerability. The general perception that women cry in every situation, even when there is no reason to do so, is reproduced by a male character who chastises Sesinyale for weeping after Amuzu has decided to give her back the land he had stolen from her. In **Excerpt 7**, the male character asserts that unnecessary weeping is typical of women, a reason why no one should spend their time helping or listening to women.

Excerpt 7

*Gliḍola Numenya bia Ahoõsia be, "Nuka fe avi fam nèle? Mi nyõnuwo koe. Eyata nyaselawo kple nyasetõwo menca mia yome o" Eyi dzi be,
"Mekae dõ du de wò, Aḍatsi?
Mekae fo võ na wò, Aḍatsi?
Konyifagbe hã, Aḍatsi
Dzidzõgbe hã, Aḍatsi
Asimedegbe hã, Aḍatsi
Agblemedegbe hã, Aḍatsi
Bubu võ le nyuwò, Aḍatsi
Aḍatsi yee, Aḍatsi"*

Numenya, the mason, asked the widow, "Why are you crying? You women! This is why nobody listens to you or believes you." He continued with a song saying,

“Who invited you, Tears?
 Who knocked at your door, Tears?
 On days of mourning, too, Tears
 On happy days too, Tears
 On market days, too, Tears
 On days of farming, Tears
 You have lost your reverence, Tears
 Tears, oh Tears.”

This song, which the Author takes the trouble to include and assign to a male character, emphasizes society’s perception of women as unnecessarily emotional. Essentially, the author’s disproportionate assignment of agency draws on the gendered stereotypes in which agentive (decisive, active) traits are considered more masculine while communal-expressive (emotional, caring) traits are perceived as more feminine (Ruble & Martin, 1998, in Abele, 2003).

4.4 Gendered Distribution of Occupations

Another area where the author appears to have conformed to gender roles fueled by gender stereotypes is his assignment of careers to the characters. Within heteronormative societies and family units such as the ones portrayed in the story, men are assigned roles that require them to execute tasks outside the home in positions that allow them to earn money to support their families. On the other hand, the women occupy domestic positions where they give care, emotional support and work on the child’s socialization (Crossman, 2019).

This gendered division of labor is also reflected in the novel. All the male characters appear to have occupations that require them to work in physically-tasking positions or from outside the home in order to make money. A physically-tasking career like blacksmithing is assigned to male characters like Amuzu and Gabaḡa. Amemaxanu, a male character, goes from being a tailor to a police officer and, finally, a military officer. The bank manager position is also allocated to a male character. Towards the end, the author introduces a medical doctor who is also male.

On the other hand, the women are confined to domestic positions as mothers taking care of children alone (Lebene) or as widows mourning dead husbands (Wɔ̀ekpɔ̀ and Sesinyale). Women who worked to earn money still worked in domestic positions as chop bar operators and cooks at the children’s hospital. Others are also assigned subordinate positions including working as hospital orderlies, cleaners, and caregivers for the sick. The only highly educated female character, Afisiafa, does not get a career during the story. However, she gets a husband.

5. Conclusion

The present study explores Kofi Nyaku’s portrayal of gender in *Amedzro Etɔ̀lia*. A feminist analysis of the text shows a reproduction of traditional gender norms that contribute to the marginalization of women. Four thematic areas are explored: the author’s introduction of the characters, his assignment of wealth, agency, and occupation. The study finds that the author foregrounds the male characters while he relegates the females to the background. Male characters are also portrayed as possessing agentive traits, giving them the ability to make life-altering decisions while the female characters are portrayed as possessing communal-expressive traits, which make them emotional and more relationship-oriented. In his assignment of wealth, the author portrays the male characters as owning wealth and property while the female characters are only associated with wealth through marriage. The author also reproduces traditional gender roles by assigning physically- tasking jobs to male characters who also earn money from these types of jobs, while assigning the female characters domestic roles as wives, caring for the home, or as widows, mourning dead husbands. The present study is important because it contributes to the broader conversation about the role of patriarchal ideologies and gender stereotypes in perpetuating gender inequality and social injustice. It also analyses a literary work written in an indigenous African language. Given that literary works written in indigenous African languages have received limited attention, the authors recommend that literary critics pay more attention to such works.

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